

THE KINGDOM OF GOD
IS WITHIN YOU

JACOB TODD

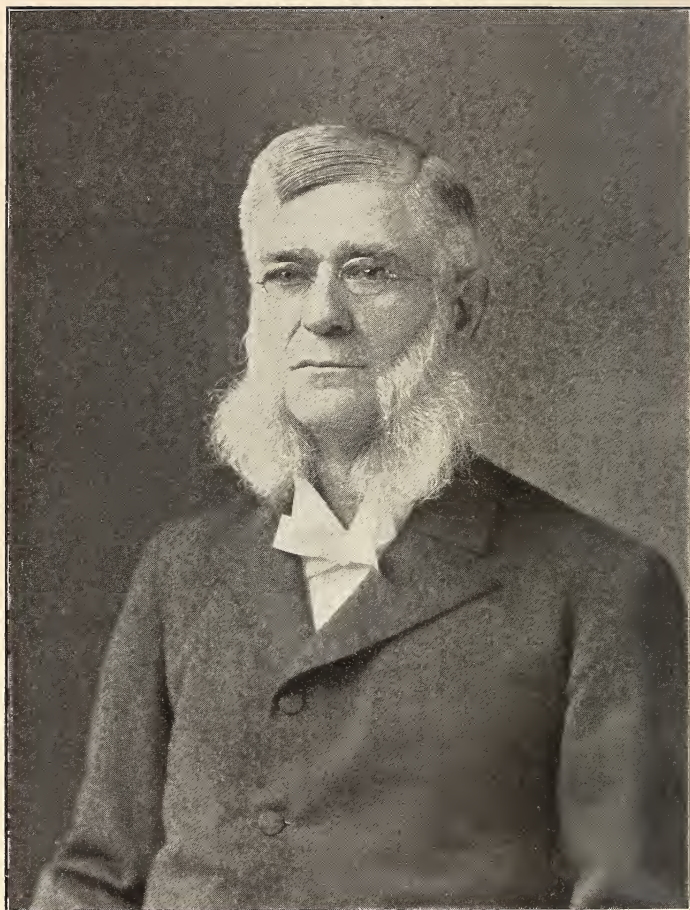


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JACOB TODD.

The Kingdom of God is Within You

Pulpit Talks

By ✓

REV. JACOB TODD, D. D.

With an Introduction by

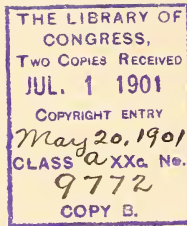
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“I say to thee, do thou repeat
To the first man thou mayest meet,
In lane, highway, or open street,

“That he and we and all men move
Under a canopy of love,
As broad as the blue sky above ;

“That doubt and trouble, fear and pain,
And anguish, all are shadows vain,
That death itself shall not remain ;

“That weary deserts we may tread,
A dreary labyrinth may thread,
Through dark ways underground be led ;

“Yet if we will one Guide obey,
The dreariest path, the darkest way,
Shall issue out in heavenly day.

“And we on divers shores now cast,
Shall meet, our perilous voyage past,
All in our Father’s house at last.”

—Richard Chenevix Trench.

NOTE.

Dr. Holmes has said: "Poor Everybody that sighs for remembrance on a planet with a core of fire and a crust of fossils." Yet it is natural that those who are following after should indulge a longing to keep alive the memory of the true and good who have passed on before.

It is with this thought mainly that these Pulpit Talks are given to any who may be interested in them. They appear very much as they were preached to the congregations to which their author ministered Sunday after Sunday, and it is hoped that the fact that they were written to appeal directly to the hearer, rather than the reader, will account for and excuse imperfections in literary form.

They have been selected with hesitation from a large quantity of manuscript with the hope that they may bear a message from a voice that is still to some in whose memory that voice still lingers, and that they may in their measure tend to strengthen and to stir to higher levels the hearts of subjects of that King who dwells in the inner life of His people and whose "nature and name is Love."

M. D. T.

SUBJECTS.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THE SEED OF THE KINGDOM

THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

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NO SCRIPTURE OF PRIVATE INTERPRETATION

THE TRANSITORY AND THE PERMANENT

THE SIN OF AARON

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THE RESTORING OF THE WITHERED HAND

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OBJECTS OF FAITH

FALSE CHRISTS

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

THE ORDER OF MELCHISEDEK

INTRODUCTION.

It has been estimated that at least two million sermons have been published in book form, but not one in a hundred of them has won a place in the enduring literature of the world. This remark, however, carries with it no implication that the majority of those sermons were not excellent when preached, or that the vast multitude of sermons never published did not serve their real purpose. The true test of a sermon is hearing it, and not reading it in print. Very likely the sermons of John the Baptist or of St. Peter, if we had verbatim copies of them as spoken, would find no important place in permanent literature.

No written words can fully reproduce the impression made by the sermons of the Rev. Dr. Jacob Todd, any more than that of his delightful conversation. One might almost as well attempt to de-

scribe the fragrance of a rose or the flavor of a peach. The charm of his personality was in them, and that charm will long linger in the grateful and affectionate recollection of his choice friends.

Few men's sermons can stand the ordeal of the printing press. The published sermons of Summerfield and Whitefield give but faint hints of the transcendent power of their spoken words; but, if I mistake not, this volume will be found to enshrine and suggest the speaker's power in much larger proportion than sermons are wont to do. Certain elements of pulpit power are manifest on all its pages. Dr. Todd had skill in analysis, rare ability to grasp and set forth the central idea of a text, great facility in the use of brilliant metaphor and of more elaborate illustration, and a firm hold of the essential truths of the gospel, which, however, he never defended with a blundering bigotry, but always by the use of methods which appealed to the most intelligent opponents of the faith.

His early style was affluent in rhetorical beauty. The first time I heard him speak was at the one hundredth birthday anniversary of Henry Boehm, so well known as the travelling companion of Bishop Asbury. That single address of fifteen or twenty

minutes would have sufficed to fix his rank as a notable orator. In later years his style was somewhat chastened by severe study, and his spiritual life was enriched by physical disability and suffering. I have never witnessed a finer triumph of mind over matter than his address at the funeral of his dear friend, Dr. McCoombs. His thin face and wasted form startled the friends who had not recently seen him; he ascended the pulpit steps with great difficulty, and could not stand without leaning on the desk. His first words were painfully slow and feeble, but in a few moments his spirit caught fire, and he poured forth a torrent of inspired thought in brilliant words about perfect salvation in Jesus Christ, consciously realized now, and about the immortal life as absolutely certain, close at hand, and verily present, vividly reminding me of the words, "We know . . . we know . . . we do know that we know him," in the first epistle of the beloved disciple, and of the glorious face to face visions of the seer of Patmos. The two features of his religious thinking and of his personal spiritual life thus referred to perpetually emerged in ever fresh forms in all his preaching, and will be found flashing forth

in fine illumination on many a page in this unique volume.

For some who knew him well these sermons will revive such scenes; they will also repay the careful study of many a young minister who never saw the benignant face of one of the notable preachers of the last third of the nineteenth century.

CYRUS D. FOSS.

The Kingdom of God.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink ; but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.—Romans XIV : 17.

We have in this passage one truth implied and one clearly expressed.

The implied truth is that a religion of ceremonies, while it is not true religion, is necessary in lifting men from their fallen state to the apprehension of pure spiritual truths. Men do not leap at a single bound from facts to principles, nor from sensuality to spirituality. A blind man, accustomed all his life to darkness, cannot be restored to sight in a moment so as to look broad daylight in the face at once. He must be kept in the twilight for a while and see men as trees walking, before he can come out in the day and see every man clearly.

A child cannot be taught to read or to work out mathematical problems or to pursue logical processes at once. He must spend years in learning the alphabet, the Arabic numerals and the forms of syllogisms before he can be inducted into the higher studies.

It is utterly impossible for a nation of savages to spring at a bound from anarchy and barbarism

into liberty and civilization. They must first feel the strong hand of despotism and learn the lessons of obedience to law and respect for authority before they are capable of self-government or susceptible of civilization.

A man will never see clearly in the darkened chamber, but he will be prepared by it for emerging into the light by and by, where he can see.

The child will never become a scholar by studying letters and figures and forms, but these will furnish him the means when his mind has become sufficiently matured to spell out great truths, to solve great problems and to arrive at far reaching conclusions.

The savage will never reach high civilization and freedom by submission to oppression and by terror of authority, but these will train him to patience and self-command, and thus qualify him for freedom and virtue when the day of his liberation shall come.

The ceremonial law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. It was not the kingdom of God, but it led us towards and prepared us for that kingdom which was yet to come. It found man in utter spiritual blindness and it opened his eyes slowly and let the light in faintly so that he might be able to see clearly when the true light

should be revealed. It took the race in worse than childish ignorance and taught it the signs and symbols by which it should be able to spell out and decipher the deep lessons of God's truth when it should graduate to the school of grace. It laid hold of man besotted and brutalized by sin and thundered law in his ears and swept the scepter of authority before his blinking eyes in order that he might be prepared for citizenship when Jesus should set up his kingdom on the earth.

A religion of ceremonies prepares the way for spirituality in two ways: In the first place it leads men to the contemplation of and the search after spiritual truths.

The Jew did not understand the meaning of half that he was required to do, as thousands of Christians to-day perform religious duties without understanding their deep spiritual import. He offered his sacrifices, performed his oblations and abstained from interdicted meats and drinks simply because the command had been given, without catching a glimpse of the great atoning sacrifice, of the washing of regeneration and the sanctified living which were symbolized by them. But while he did not comprehend them he did apprehend the truth that they were symbols of something and could not help meditating upon them and inquir-

ing after their meaning. So every man who to-day performs the duties of religion and goes through the forms of worship, while he may not enter into the spirit of them will be led to think and wonder about heavenly things and will thus be made better by them. Let a savage examine and study a telescope until he understands its use, then let him look through it on some cloudy night. His vision will not pierce the clouds, but he will readily guess that there is something behind them to be seen when the sky is clear.

Forms, ceremonies and duties are only the members which make up the body of religion, but keep them constantly moving before a man and it will not be long before he will conjecture that there must be a soul within them somewhere and will be led to inquire after it.

The search after truth is often of as much value to men as the truth is after it is found. The mind is expanded and elevated by the effort and the heart learns to love truth before it has discovered it. A religion made up only of ceremonies and a round of duties will lift man out of his sensuality and make him more heavenly minded simply by suggesting spiritual realities, and thus leading him to contemplate and search after higher truths. The rainbow is only a mystery at first, but by and by

it forces the conviction that there is a sun shining somewhere and will send the mind along lines of light to find it. The shadow will suggest the substance.

Then in the second place a religion of ceremonies serves to interpret spiritual truth when it is revealed. A photograph is very unlike a man. It has no warmth, no life, no love, in it. It is only a collection of a few lights and shadows upon a plain surface. Yet somehow by studying that picture you will be able to recognize the person when you see him. So the forms of godliness have very little in common with its power and yet familiarity with the forms prepares us to recognize and appreciate the power when it falls upon us. Let a child be brought up in the observance of every Christian duty while yet he knows not the deep reason for their performance and by and by when faith's eagle eye pierces the mists and he beholds the King in his beauty he will recognize him in an instant as the unknown God whom he has ignorantly worshiped until now.

The Jew was required to select a blemishless lamb from his fold as an offering to God. A blemishless man must also be set apart for the priesthood to make the offering for him. This priest must purify himself before his offering would be

accepted, and the altar on which the sacrifice is laid must be purified, or the offering will be rejected. He did not understand the meaning of all this—it was mystery all. But when in after years truth was revealed that only he who is washed from his sins and purified by the Holy Ghost and who keeps himself unspotted from the world will be accepted of God, he saw the shadow of this spirit truth in every lamb, in every priest and in every altar of his Father's religion. He was prepared for it, he grasped it and it grasped him.

Take a more familiar example still. A child at school commences the study of geography. He has before him only a map, a picture made up of colors, lines, dots and names. He has not the slightest idea that this picture represents the earth's surface and could not understand the truth if it were stated to him. Month after month he traces out crooked lines called rivers and finds dots called cities until at last he can tell you where each one of these is found upon the map. And now he has mastered geography, yet does not understand the meaning of anything he has learned. His knowledge will be perfectly meaningless and perfectly useless to him so long as he remains in the school room. Let him go out into the world now and sail up a river, disembark at a city and ride over

a mountain, and at once as the truth breaks upon him that the map was a picture of the world, his thought sweeps round our globe—he sees it dotted with cities, ridged with mountains, furrowed by rivers and washed by oceans and seas. The map was useless until he saw the world, but now he could not understand the world without it. The type may be all mystery while we have it alone, but when it is placed alongside its counterpart the type interprets the thing typified. God gave us a system of types and shadows for the double purpose of suggesting spiritual truths and of preparing us to understand and appreciate them when the light of the gospel should reveal them.

But the Jewish dispensation was not intended to be permanent, but transitional. It was not an end but only a means of attaining an end. It was not the kingdom of God but only a territory that had to be crossed in order to reach the kingdom. Paul saw the truth when the scales had fallen from his eyes, and cried, “The law having the shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.”

The journey of the prodigal from the far country back to the old homestead did not readmit him

to the family. It brought him nearer home at every step but it was not until his father threw his arms about his neck and kissed him—not until the robe and ring were placed upon him—not until the fatted calf was killed and the old sire had said “This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found,” that he was readmitted to his father’s house. The dispensation of ceremonies only brought a man to the portals of the kingdom, but there it must stop; it could go no further. This was no arbitrary regulation of the Almighty, but it was because in the nature of things that outward religious observances cannot make a child of God.

The same thing is true to-day of every man whose religion consists only in acts and ceremonies and who performs them simply as duties. He is only a servant, not a son. He is very near the kingdom of God, but he has not entered it. He is still under the law though only a few steps from grace. Praying, singing, preaching, working, sacrificing and self-denial if performed simply because they are commanded leave us just where the Jews stood when Jesus first preached the gospel to them. We have the form of godliness without the power; we have the letter but lack the spirit. The Jew thought that true religion consisted in meats and

drinks, in outward ceremonial observances; and there are thousands in the Christian church to-day who have no higher notion of God's kingdom. They perform their duties and say their prayers, and call that Christianity. The heathen and Mahometan do the same. That is not freedom. That is bondage. O brethren, Jesus waves his sceptre over a kingdom where the people do not talk about duties and sacrifice and crosses, but where they shout and sing of privilege, of opportunity and of enjoyment. The religion of Jesus, the reign of grace, the true kingdom of God, "is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

This leads us to the truth clearly expressed in the text, viz: The spiritual nature of the Christian religion.

It may seem strange at first thought that God's kingdom should be represented as less than universal. We have been taught to believe that his scepter reaches to the utmost verge of creation and that every star that wanders through the blue midnight swears allegiance to his throne. Inspired lips have told us "If we ascend up into heaven, God is there; if we make our bed in hell, behold, he is there; if we take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there

shall his hand lead us and his right hand shall hold us. "His kingdom ruleth over all." "In Him we live, move and have our being." Every act, thought and word of our lives is under His law. Yet here his kingdom is represented as excluding the material universe, as having nothing to do with the actions and words of men, but as comprising only moral principles and emotions, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

The truth is, the boundaries of God's kingdom contract within narrower limits just as men rise higher and higher in spiritual conceptions. An earthly monarch is called king of all his realm, and so he is in a low, coarse sense, but in a much higher and truer sense he is king of his people. So God is king of all this universe, but men and not dead matter are the chief subjects of his government. But there is still a kingdom within the human empire. God aims not so much to rule over our bodies as to reign in our spirit. Not our outward acts and words but our internal thoughts and affections are the immediate surroundings of His throne. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, lo, here, or lo, there, for behold the kingdom of God is within you." All worlds are under the government of the Great King, but they are only provinces, sub-

jects held in vassalage, the human heart is the seat of government, the central kingdom, the place where the King has his throne and holds his court.

The one all-comprehending principle of this inner spiritual government is righteousness. This is more than simple justice. When a man exacts no more than his due and pays all that he owes, when he gives full weight and measure in all his business transactions with his fellows, we call him a just or righteous man. But it is easy to see that such a definition would fall far short of justice in the sight of God. No man can be just who does not meet all his obligations and satisfy all claims against him. But men are not our only creditors and our liabilities cannot all be paid in coin. We have dealt heavily in the commerce of another world, we have been redeemed, "not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ." We owe our all to God. We are bankrupt all, and when we have surrendered ourselves with all we have and are to God, we have only met the demands of simple justice.

Righteousness is broader than justice. It does not ask what claim another has upon us but simply what is right to be done under the circumstances. Justice has no claim upon charity, it cannot exact

mercy at my hands, it makes no demand upon my affections. But righteousness sends me with gifts to the door of want; it stays my hand when I would take just vengeance upon a fallen foe, and it bids me illuminate all my acts with the light of love. There is a department of justice in God's kingdom, but that is not the whole of the government. Not what I owe but what is right is the measure of Christian living.

But righteousness goes even deeper than this. A man might do not only what justice required, but all that was right to be done, and yet never have penetrated into the spirituality of the Christian religion. A child might obey all his father's commands, but do it through fear or from hope of reward and then he would only be a servant and not a son. True filial affection would lift him above both rewards and punishments to find delight in doing his father's will simply because it is his will. A mathematical problem was once given to the public in France, and the prize offered to the man who would solve it was a seat in the French Academy of Science. A young man rushed into the presence of Lamartine one day exclaiming, "I have solved the problem, I have won the prize." The great Frenchman quietly asked, "Why did you solve the problem?" "Why, to obtain the seat in

the Academy," replied the youth. "Then you are unworthy of it," said Lamartine, "for no man deserves a seat in the halls of learning but he who studies from the love of truth."

A man must not only do what is right, but do it because it is right in order to rise to sonship in God's family or to obtain a seat in God's kingdom. The righteousness of the gospel is not simply the doing and saying of right things; all this might be done from low, sordid motives; but it is the doing right from the love of right. God looks not at the outward man but requires truth in the inward parts. O, there is a lofty freedom in this kingdom. The man who enters this realm is not bound by commandments or goaded by duties. He loves the right for its own sake and does it because he loves it and finds sweetest enjoyment in the doing. The law of righteousness, when we get it in us and get ourselves enveloped in it, becomes "the perfect law of liberty." Near the throne in God's kingdom men are all free; as they wander from the throne they become servants, vassals and slaves.

The second characteristic of the Christian religion is Peace. "The work of righteousness is peace and the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance forever." It is easy to see that righteousness ruling in the kingdoms of this world

would hush the sound of battle and robe the world in peace. Let this principle mount the throne and rule in the thought and actions of men and nations, and war's blood-smeared countenance would never grin over murdered armies and smouldering cities, but peace instead would wave her green olive branches from shore to shore.

But the peace spoken of in the text is not that of nations but the inner calm of the soul. Man's spirit troubled and tossed by sin seeks quiet and rest everywhere, but seeks them in vain until Jesus breathes his own righteousness into the soul and whispers, "Peace, be still," then, and not until then there comes a great calm. In vain do men offer costly sacrifices, in vain do they swing before the altar the incense burdened censer, in vain do they unbosom themselves at the confessional and perform their penances; in vain do they fly to the monastery and the hermitage; in vain do they abstain from meat and drink and perform all the outward duties of religion. Peace of soul is not found here. God's kingdom is peace, but we are not in it until Christ is in us. Not until we catch the spirit of his righteousness and incarnate it does the calm of the divine nature settle down upon the soul. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his." Would any man have soul rest?

then let him get soul righteousness. The consciousness of being right will give him peace of soul though all the world were in arms against him. Paul and Silas were in prison at Philippi, in the dungeon, with their feet fast in the stocks at the midnight hour. The jailer stood without, clothed with authority, with the keys of the prison in his girdle and with a sword at his side. But Paul and Silas knew they were right and the jailer had a troublesome suspicion that he was in the wrong. The earthquake came but it did not disturb the peace of God's servants; they only sang the louder. But the jailer trembled like an aspen, for there was an earthquake within him, and cried, "What must I do to be saved?" I would rather be right and in a dungeon than be wrong and on a throne. The peace for which the world is sighing is not to be found in our surroundings but dwells like a twin sister with righteousness in the soul. The kingdom of God is first righteousness, and it is then peace, deep, abiding, eternal peace.

And finally, it is joy in the Holy Ghost. This declaration stands in bold contrast to the common opinion that in order to be a Christian one must wear a long face and be melancholy. Somehow the notion obtains that if a man desires enjoyment he must keep out of church. Men talk of enjoy-

ing themselves while they are young and full of spirit, and of settling down to a religious life when age has cooled the blood and thrown a shadow over life. All such notions are based upon the false assumption that the kingdom of God is one of gloom and not of gladness, that it is a land covered with nightshade and cypress, where flowers never bloom and birds never sing. There never was a sadder mistake. The kingdom of God is all radiant with the dimpled smiles and rings with the merry laughter of little children, for Jesus said, "of such is the kingdom of heaven." It is not a land of silence and gloom, but one of sunshine and blossoms and song. If any man on earth has a right to be happy it is that man who can look out over the world and say, "These green fields and hills are my Father's possessions;" who can look up to yonder blue arch and say "That star-gemmed temple is my Father's house. I am an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ." Where God frowns there is darkness and tears, where he smiles there is light and joy. There may be feverish excitement and thoughtless hilarity outside of the kingdom, but they are thorny flowers which leave the hand wounded and bleeding that plucks them. Joy sweet, substantial, fadeless, is a blossom that bursts only under the shadow of the throne.

But mark you, it is joy in the Holy Ghost. We must not go outside the church and beyond the influence of the Holy Spirit to find our enjoyment; we must seek it in the Holy Ghost, in spirit communions, in the work to which the Holy Ghost prompts us and in the triumphs of the cross achieved by the sword of the Spirit. The religion of Jesus does not send its disciples out into the world for enjoyment, into questionable amusements such as the dance and the dice, the theatre and the race course. A deeper and more lasting enjoyment is supplied us right in our Father's house. We may revel in joy and gladness such as angels know without leaving the side of Christ or grieving the Holy Spirit. The man who finds little enjoyment in religion may be certain that it is because he has so little of it. He who has gotten fairly into God's kingdom, who has wrapped himself up in Christ's righteousness and wrapped the righteous spirit of Christ up within his own soul, who is at peace both with God and man, will find a rapture of soul in the worship and service of God which rises as high above the joy of the world as the snow white peak of Mont Blanc towers above the dusky pyramids of the Nile. The disciples once in their concern for their Master's comfort proposed to procure him food. Said Jesus, "I have

meat to eat that ye know not of." They had not yet penetrated far enough into the kingdom to understand that saying and they questioned among themselves whether some one had secretly brought him food. Then said Jesus, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." The devil once feigned concern for Christ's welfare and proposed to him to turn stones into bread. Jesus replied, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It is our privilege to penetrate so deeply into the kingdom of God, to share so perfectly the nature of Christ as to enter into the very joy of our Lord. Just in degree as we become like Christ will the world loose its hold upon us and will it become our meat and drink to do our Master's will.

The Seed of the Kingdom.

THE SEED OF THE KINGDOM.

So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how,—Mark IV : 26-27.

Christ was not educated in the schools; notwithstanding he grew in wisdom while he grew in stature. He was a close student all through his earthly life, but he studied not the pages written by men, but the great book of God which lay open all around him. The waving grass, the nodding lily, the vine, the fig-tree, and the birds of the air all photographed themselves upon his soul and furnished him material for far-reaching reflection and profoundest moral teaching. To the fact of his never having learned letters we owe the incomparable parables of the gospel. Had he been a student of books his illustrations of divine truth had naturally been drawn from them. The books which were extant in his day have most of them long since perished, and had the gospels abounded in allusions to them, the New Testament would to-day be a locked book with the key forever lost.

But nature, like its great author, is "the same yesterday, to-day and forever," and an illustration drawn from any fact or process in nature loses

nothing by the lapse of time; it will be understood equally everywhere, and will be comprehended alike by the learned and the ignorant. In most of the parables of our Lord the works of God are made to explain the word of God, the book of nature is employed as a commentary upon the book of revelation. For this reason the parables are the simplest and least liable to be misunderstood of all our Lord's teachings. We have only to take the facts, the laws and the processes in nature mentioned in the parable, give them a spiritual interpretation and then apply them to our own souls and we have the lesson which the Master designed to teach.

In the parable which constitutes our text the planting of seed in the earth and the processes by which it is matured for the harvest are used to illustrate the operations of divine grace in the soul and point out the process by which man rises from the earthy to a fitness for the garner of God. The Master points out just three particulars in which he declares the seed and the soil to be analagous to grace and the soul, viz.: In the sowing, in the growing, and in the garnering.

"So is the kingdom of God," says our Lord, "as if a man should cast seed into the ground." In other words, God's kingdom does not spring up

spontaneously in a human soul, it is not a plant indigenous to this soil, it is not a latent germ slumbering in human nature that only needs culture and development. A seed from a purer clime must be buried in these corrupt hearts of ours if they are ever to bring forth fruits of holiness. Any field left to itself, no matter how well watered by the rain and warmed by the sun, will produce vastly more briars and thorns and weeds than it will grain; and so any human soul, however great its culture and however favorable its surroundings, if left to its own natural bent will run into more evil than good. "The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." "The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be." "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." No shuttles of earth however cunning and swift, are capable of weaving the robes of heaven.

Because of false notions upon this point there is much erroneous teaching abroad and many fruitless efforts in religion. But too often men strive to become Christlike by lopping off their sinful habits, by severing themselves from ungodly associations and then by devoting themselves to pious meditation and charitable deeds. We hear a great deal about education, culture and development in

religion as though the root of the matter were already within us and only needed favoring circumstances to spring up and yield fruits of holiness. All such religion ignores the supernatural altogether. It needs no prayer to God and asks no assistance of the Holy Spirit. It is human in its origin and needs only human means for its unfolding and perfection. A man may establish a government in and over himself by which he will so restrain his natural dispositions that his life shall be moral and exemplary. But that is not the kingdom of God, that is his own empire. A religion born of man gets its reward in the praise of men. Human in its origin it is also human in its end.

In the kingdom of God there is much of culture and development; but it is the culture and development of a divinely implanted seed. There is vast growth and unfolding in true religion, but it is the growth and expansion not of an old life but of a new. The children of the kingdom are not simply the children of wrath re-baptized or clad in new garments; they are a new creation, they are all born again 'not of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God.' A new life must be deposited in the soul by the divine parent if we are ever to grow up the children of God.

The religion of Jesus is a new seed planted in an old soil. The soil may be very corrupt and may have nourished all kinds of noxious weeds, but the seed and not the soil will determine the character of the future plant. A single seed is dropped in a reeking marsh. By laws which we little understand that seed sends out its root like antennae to lay hold upon the corruption and mud around it. These it transforms and appropriates and by its accumulation rises in a stately stalk; then it unfolds in green and graceful leaves and then blossoms out into a snow white lily. It was not the marsh that made the lily, but the seed that wove corruption into spotless purity. Human nature can never be moulded by human hands and natural laws into the Christlike, but if God drop the seed of eternal life into the soul there is no nature so vile but the divine germ will transform it into the likeness of God.

When we talk of culture and development every thing depends upon what we are going to cultivate and develop. Is it the old soil with the growth indigenous to it? then our harvest will be tares. Would we have golden grain, we must get the seed from above. The very first step in religion is the implantation of a new life in the soul through the operation of the Holy Ghost.

In explaining a kindred parable Jesus says, "The seed is the word of God." But let no one suppose that a careful study of God's word and the enshrinement of its truths in our memories is all that is meant by this passage. The seed of the kingdom is not a word of God, but the word of God. It is not a truth buried in the soul, but the truth. It is not a divine life, it is the life of God. We call a biography the life of a man. We do not mean that it is really his life, but only the record of his life. And so we call the Bible the word of God, but it is only the record of the life and teachings of the Word of God while upon earth. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God * * * and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The seed is the Word, and the Word is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is also "The Life, the Truth and the Way and no man cometh to the Father but by him." The planting of the seed is the having "Christ formed within us the hope of glory."

It is mystery all and would not be like God if it were otherwise. We may not comprehend how Jesus can dwell in human hearts, but if the divine life can wrap itself up in the babe of Bethlehem and

can grow and expand in the man of sorrow and acquainted with grief, then the same divine life can be planted as a germ in our natures and can unfold into "the image of the heavenly." Though the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him yet there is a sense in which each human heart can. We are not in God's kingdom until Christ is in us. Says Paul to the Corinthians, "Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates?" The planting of the seed is the admitting Jesus into the soul and this is the first step in our progress home to the kingdom of God. But the beginning of a religious life is not the end of it. There must first be a sowing, but there must next be a growing or there will be no harvest.

THE GROWING.

The text says "So is the kingdom of God as if a man should cast seed into the ground and should sleep and rise night and day and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how." It is assumed that the man did all he could to prepare the ground for the reception of the seed. There was some clearing and ploughing and harrowing necessary before it was ready for sowing, and without which the seed had never taken root. The

ground had to be broken up thoroughly and turned upside down before it could receive the seed. But the grain once sown nothing remains for the farmer to do but to keep down the weeds and wait.

So the human soul needs to be thoroughly broken up and turned upside down before the life of God can find a lodgment in it. The ploughshare of repentance must furrow the old nature deeply before the new can take root in it. But the soul once born anew needs little assistance from human hands to develop into the image of Him who created it. All the skill of our race cannot make one blade of grass or ear of corn, though any man can crush the grass beneath his feet and destroy the golden grain. In grace as in nature anybody can mar God's work but none can reconstruct it, much less create it anew. There is a great deal of talk about developing the Christian life within us and, properly understood, there is no objection to the expression, but after all, what does any man do towards moulding himself into the Christly? Just about what the farmer can do in his field—he can keep down the weeds and give the buried germ a chance. The future harvest is all locked up in the seed and all it asks at the hands of the husbandman is to take all obstructions away, and

God's sun and rain will lift it out of its grave and make it stand a thing of beauty upon the earth and at last will crown it with a coronet of gold.

All the young convert can do toward becoming a mature saint is just to give the life of God which is swelling within him, a fair chance to grow. Tears will not wash out the stains of sin; penances will not purify his affections, and all the deeds of the law and the gospel will not stamp the divine impress upon him. Holy exercises are essential to growth in grace, and as we hope to become like Christ we must be faithful in their performance. But they help to unfold the divine life within us, not by nourishing it, but by removing obstructions from it. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches are pressing coldly and heavily down upon our hearts to choke the life within. When we go to our closets to commune with God we shut the world out and let the divine sunlight stream down into our hearts to quicken and expand our better nature; and when out in the world, if like our Master we go about doing good, every time we lift a burden from human shoulders we lift a clod from our own souls which enables the Christlike to rise higher within us. It is not the prayer or deed of mercy that makes us better, but God who works in us "to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

The conditions of salvation are one thing and its cause is another. Salvation is of grace, not of works lest any man should boast. "By the deeds of the law shall no man be justified." Our righteousness is only as filthy rags before God. There is so much of impurity in our very best deeds that they could never give us a meetness for heaven. O, it is a precious truth that religion is a heaven implanted life and a heaven unfolded life and that it is placed beyond the reach of human hands, with their polluting touch. What if when this mortal covering is stripped off we should stand as photographs of all that we had done and thought and felt since our conversion! Think you God would recognize his child in such a caricature? The likeness of Jesus is so fine a thing that no human truth must touch it. God's hand must not only sketch it in the soul at conversion, but the same hand must fill up that sketch day after day until it is complete and entire, wanting nothing. We can keep the shadows off the canvas and keep the clods off the grain but we can neither paint the picture nor make the seed grow.

Man has his work to perform and God has his. God can help us in what we have to do, but we cannot assist him. The seed once planted in the ground it sprung up and grew the farmer knew

not how. The soul born from above rises day after day in the majesty of its Maker, and who can tell how? "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." We kneel at the foot of the throne and look up and wait for the King to appear and ere we know it he is seated in our souls.

I go to God with a soul burdened with sorrow and sin. I kneel in his presence and pray and try to believe, but my prayer and faith I know do not take away my guilt and sin. Prayer lifts me up nearer God and every time faith knits her muscles in a fresh hold upon the promises I feel some huge doubt roll from my oppressed soul, but the sin and guilt are there still. By and by a tide which I cannot see washes all my stains away and I rise justified and exultant. But how the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin I do not know. I am certain that the harvests grow, but I do not know how for I cannot understand the secret springs of vegetable life. The fact of our conversion and growth in grace we can assuredly know, but the how we shall never understand until we know as we are known. "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

The parable further indicates the conditions under which this mysterious growth progresses most steadily. The man is said to sleep and rise night and day while the seed is springing and growing he knows not how. The intimation seems to be that he slept by night and rose betimes and went about his toil doing the work that his hand found to do without distressing himself with doubts as to whether nature would do its work. Having cleared the ground and sowed the seed, his work there was done and so he seeks a field of labor somewhere else, and while he is intent upon his daily task scarcely thinking whether the seed which he sowed is taking root, it springs up and grows without his knowledge. O could we but learn the lesson of the parable and like him faithfully do our own work, trusting God to take care of what belongs to him, the harvest of spiritual life would be much more abundant. We don't grow any faster by constantly watching the work of grace within. A man does not preserve his health and grow strong by spending his time before the glass examining his tongue and by feeling his pulse to detect symptoms of disease, but by manly exercise out in the open air. And so in spiritual life it is not the man who is constantly analyzing his feelings and dis-

secting his motives and watching his heart, who grows up a giant in the Lord, but the man who having given God his heart leaves God to take care of it while he bends all his energies in accomplishing the work which God has given him to do. Don't trouble yourselves about the work of grace, that is God's work and he does his work well. But rise early and look well to the deeds of charity and mercy and justice—these God has given as your life task—and while you are doing faithfully your work, the seed will spring and grow up you will not know how. Jesus has said elsewhere, "If any man will save his life he shall lose it, but if any man will lose his life for my sake, the same shall find it." Go break up the fallow soil for your neighbor and help him sow the seeds of eternal life and the harvest will be ripening in your own field all the while.

THE GARNERING.

The parable concludes by saying, "When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come." There has been not a little conjecture in regard to the meaning of this clause and some have concluded that the Savior here teaches that as soon as a man reaches maturity in grace, in that moment he dies and is gathered to the garner of God. If the

Master had given us an enigma instead of a parable such a solution might be admissible, for an enigma requires that every member shall have its counterpart in the answer, but a parable is a simple illustration of a truth and must not be pressed beyond the evident intention of the author. Now, the unquestioned drift of this parable is to teach men after having given God their heart, to apply themselves to the discharge of Christian duty, doing what their hands find to do with their might, leaving the work of grace within to take care of itself. The assurance given is that while they are working for Christ and for souls regardless of self unconsciously they are rising in the likeness of their Lord; and now the simple and natural conclusion is that when such a life is over these men shall reap a rich reward. They did not spend their time watching their own harvest, but it ripened none the less. They did not know how it grew, but it did rise first into the blade, then the ear and then the full corn in the ear. At last when the harvest time comes and others gather their grain they thrust in their sickle and find golden treasures that they dreamed not of. Elsewhere Jesus teaches that people will be surprised at the judgment day at the reward which awaits them. The judge will turn to those on his right hand and

say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee? or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in, or naked and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick or in prison and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me." They had been doing the Lord's work without thinking about their reward. Their harvest had grown up they knew not how, but when the reaping time came their sickles were not idle nor empty. God does not ask a man to work in his field for nothing but he does require that he shall go about his work without all the time thinking of his pay. He may get very little reward in this life, but oh, the harvest time is coming. Christianity means sacrifice here and reward hereafter. Let a man trust his Lord till his work is done, and

then to his amazement he will find that the whole harvest which he grew for his Master is given him for his wages and heaven will be piled high with golden sheaves of blessing.

The Head of the Church.

THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

And he is the head of the body, the church.—Col. I : 18.

Few words in the English language have been used with such a variety of signification as the word church. We sometimes speak of the church when we mean nothing more than the building in which people meet for worship. Again we use the same word to designate the people collectively who steadily meet in any given place for worship. Sometimes we speak of the church meaning by that term all the congregations who believe in the same creed, and who practice the same forms of worship, together with all the institutions under the control of that denomination. Thus when we speak of the Methodist Church, or of the Presbyterian Church, or of the Baptist Church, we mean, not only all the people of these different denominations, but also their houses of worship, their colleges, their publishing establishments, their missionary society, and all their other charitable institutions.

Again, we often give a much wider signification than even this to the word. We speak of the church, and mean, by that term, to embrace all de-

nominations of Christians the wide world over, together with all the machinery and appliances for sustaining and propagating the Christian religion that are anywhere possessed and employed by Christian people.

Few men in this day, are so narrow-minded as to believe that Christ's church is bounded by any denominational line; and when, therefore, men speak of the church as opposed to the world, they mean all who bear the name of Christ, together with all that they have consecrated to his cause.

We sometimes rise to a conception of the church still higher than this. When we speak of the Church of the First-born in Heaven we mean not only all who now profess the name of Christ on earth, but also all who have ever lived and died in the faith, and all who ever shall.

The church in this broad sense, however, is seldom a unit in our conceptions. It exists in our minds as a compound made up of two very distinct if not very different parts. By qualifying the word we make it designate one or the other of these parts. We speak of the church militant as something very distinct from the church triumphant.

Even the church on earth is very vaguely defined in our minds, for we separate it into the visible and invisible, while we can neither fix the limit of the one nor the other.

Before we can understand the import of much of the gospel, we must understand clearly and definitely what is meant by the church. It would be vain to seek its meaning in philology, for words have no fixed meaning, but signify anything that common usage makes them.

We are not concerned to know what the word signified in any given age of the world; for this would be simply to ascertain what the conceptions of men were at that time respecting the church. We are deeply concerned, however, to know what God means by the church; and this can only be learned from the Holy Scriptures. Turn we then to the Bible. First: It does not mean a building for purposes of religious worship. The scriptures informed us that Jacob once left Beersheba and journeyed toward Haran. Night overtook him on the journey and with stones for his pillow he laid him down and slept. In his sleep he dreamed "and beheld a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed, and behold I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest,

and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. Jacob awoke with the dream still burning in his soul, and he was afraid and exclaimed, "How dreadful is this place; this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." God's house was there upon the barren plain, where there was neither minaret, nor walls, nor floors, nor ceiling. As it was then, so it is now. God's church is not made of stone or brick, or wood, or canvas, but wherever he and his children meet, there is his house. Jesus and his apostles all exhorted the church, long before the foundation stones of the first Christian temple were laid. Burn down every Christian house of worship upon the earth to-day, and the Church of Jesus Christ, like the three Hebrew children, would come out of the flames unhurt, without even the smell of fire upon her garments.

Again, the Church of God is not identical with any religious organization. It is true, the scriptures speak of the Seven Churches of Asia, meaning thereby seven congregations of Christians; but they also speak of the church in the house of Aquilla and Priscilla; of the church in Nymphas' house, and of the church in the house of Philemon. In these cases, they evidently mean something less

than any organization known by that name in our day. A pious household, however small, makes a church in the scripture sense.

But then the sacred writers often use the word in a sense wider far than religious denomination. The Apostolic Church was very early divided into sects; and one said he was of Paul, another of Apollos, and another of Cephas; but Paul grouped them all together into one church, and said they were all of Christ. Differences in regard to non-essential doctrines, differences in the forms of church government, differences of nationality and race have nothing to do in fixing the boundaries of Christ's Church. Here "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for they are all one in Christ Jesus."

The Church of Christ is smaller than any single congregation, and it is larger than any one denomination.

But again, Christ's church is not coincident with the aggregate of all religious denominations; and hence his church in heaven will differ in its membership from the visible church on earth. All who are members of the church visible are not recognized by Christ as his disciples. Even in the days of his flesh, when there was so little temptation to hypocrisy, there were some names on the church

roll that were not found in the Lamb's book of Life. Judas was numbered with the twelve at the moment that he sold his Master for the thirty pieces of silver. John tells us of certain members of the early church who went out from among them, but he says "They were not of us." They were all members of the church as it appeared to men, but not as it was seen by God.

But while the invisible church excludes some who are members of the visible church, it will include others whose names have never been upon a church record on earth. Whether the number excluded will be greater than the number added to it we do not know and hence we cannot tell whether the invisible will be greater or less than the visible church. While the Savior nowhere indicates the number or proportion of his true followers who are outside the visible church, his language seems to imply that they are not few. Said he, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring; and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." Peter said respecting a man who was identified with no church organization, that "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

It is clear, we think, from the foregoing reasons and passages from scripture, that the Church of Christ does not exactly coincide with any or all organizations which are called by that name among men. What then is the Church of Christ? If we search in scripture for the central idea—that which is common to all the representations of the church—we shall find it to be vital union with Christ. The manner of its constitution differs from that of any other association on earth. Men are not elected to membership here by the suffrages of their fellows. No price can purchase admission. A belief in common with Church members in the cardinal doctrines of Christianity does not entitle us to seats in their midst. Pilgrimages of penance or a life of morality will not number us with Christ's disciples. We are not linked together by a common sentiment, by a common price, by a common creed, or by a common morality, but by a common union with Christ. Our place in an organization does not determine our relation to Christ, but our relation to Him establishes our right to a place in His church. Christ is the door of the sheepfold, and to be members of His flock we must enter by Him. We may get into the visible church through other channels, but never into the invisible. "Who-soever climbeth up by any other way, the same is a

thief and a robber.” There is all the difference between an ordinary association for religious purposes and the church that there is between an automaton and a living man. The one is wired together by creeds and ceremonies; the other is welded together by the fires of an all-pervading life.

In the text, the church is represented as a human body, with Christ as the head. His thoughts, His will, His life, are the bond of union between all the members. Sever the connection between any member and the head, and, no matter how nearly it may stand related to other living members, it will become paralyzed, will wither and die. Organic union amounts to nothing in the body if there be no vital union with the head; so visible connection with Christ’s church is powerless to make us His disciples; it is His life alone that can make us living members of His mystical body.

Elsewhere Jesus represents Himself as the vine, and His true followers as the branches, and emphatically tells us that we can only bear fruit by abiding in Him. The union here is not mechanical simply. You may graft a thousand branches into the vine, and dove-tail them never so closely, but if the life of the vine flow not through them, they will not be of it, though they are in it. They will be fruitless and dead, though united to the same

vine with other branches that are waving their green leaves and purple clusters all around them. It is getting so near to Christ that every throb of His great heart sends His life gushing through every avenue of our being—that makes us members of His church.

Once the church is spoken of under the figure of a building, in which each member is represented as constituting a stone, Jesus Christ Himself being the head of the corner, "in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the spirit." A careless reader might get the idea that the union here spoken of was merely association for religious purposes. The stones in a temple have no higher union than juxtaposition; and if men are to be brought together in a similar way to form a temple for God, it is only necessary in order to constitute the church that men should join hands for holy purposes. As if to guard against this very error, Peter says we must come to Christ as unto a living stone, disallowed, indeed, of men, but chosen of God and precious. "Ye also," he says, "as lively stones are built up a spiritual house." In other words, the Church of Christ would be like a temple if all its stones were alive,

and if their life all gushed forth from the great corner stone and flowed alike from foundation to the giddiest pinnacle.

I am not certain that Peter does not here refer to the mysterious law by which minerals arrange their particles, in well defined geometrical figures in crystalization. There is a kind of life in a stone, that, when its particles are in a state which renders motion easy, will arrange them, with inimitable skill, into cube or pyramid or rhomb or prism. The crystalline structure might be called, with little impropriety, the living stone, in contradistinction to the shapeless mass of uncrystalline structure. If this be the Apostle's meaning, the figure then teaches that, as the particles in a crystal are arranged and held together by some mysterious life-force, so the church, built upon the Rock of Ages, is nothing more than the crystalization of human hearts around their Savior through the mysterious life energy of Jesus Christ.

Even when the church is represented under the figure of a sheepfold, this central idea undergoes very little modification. For the flock, we are told is held together, not by hedges or walls or chains, but simply by each one knowing the shepherd's voice and following him. Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice and follow Me." The flock is

bound together only by each one being bound to the shepherd by ties of trust and affection.

Look where we may in scripture, the church of Jesus Christ is a living body, united to a living head, not by the ligaments of ecclesiasticism but by a common life.

If such be the principle on which the church is organized, it follows that we cannot be made members of it by catechetical instruction, by baptism, by confirmation, by probation, or by any other rite or ceremony. We may build a magnificent temple for worship, we may have a ministry ordained in the regular succession, we may serve out our probation and be admitted into full connection, our names may stand high upon the record of the church here, yet all this will avail us nothing if there be no personal union between Jesus and our souls. The test of membership at the last great day will be, not whether our names are found upon the record of the church, but whether they are found in the Lamb's Book of Life. The book which seals immortal destinies is not a book of Chronicles, nor of Acts, nor of Psalms, but of life. I have seen sand and steel filings all mixed together, and have seen a magnet thrown into this mixture. The particles of sand were just as near the magnet as were those of steel; yet when the

magnet was lifted the sand all remained, while the steel, clinging to it, was taken along.

So I have thought, in the church on earth, living Christians and merely formal ones may be associated together in the same communion, but when Jesus comes down into the church to gather together His own elect, those who are true steel will feel the magnetism of His nature, and will be drawn irresistibly to Him, while the others will neither know Him nor be known of Him.

I would not undervalue the visible church nor any of its ordinances. It is a God-appointed institution, and no Christian has a right voluntarily to remain outside its pale. The logic which forces the obligation of uniting with the church is simple and conclusive. God is no respecter of persons, and if, therefore, any one man has a right to remain out of the church, all others have the same right. The exercise of this right would be the annihilation of the church. But God has ordained that His church should never be destroyed, and has commanded that we forsake not the assembling of ourselves together. It is the imperative duty, therefore, of some to be constantly organized into a visible church, and since there is no privileged class in Christ, if it is the duty of one, it is of all. If we are united in Christ, we are bound to unite with each other in order to work more efficiently for Him.

But while I insist that every man who has given his heart to God should also give his hand to the church, I want to caution every soul who has taken upon him the vows of the church, with all the solemnity possible, not to rest his hopes of salvation simply upon this church membership. The visible church is not a saving institution, but a working place. Your entrance here is no evidence that your work is done; but it is rather a pledge that you have consecrated yourselves to the service of the Master. It is your solemn duty to attend all the means of grace, and to engage, as far as possible, in all the enterprises of the church. But dream not for a moment that these alone will admit you into the church above. Enter the church and work in it with your might, but rest your hopes of heaven on nothing less than conscious vital union with Jesus. You must be a living member of that living body of which Christ is the living head, in order to membership in the invisible church.

The Parable of the Talents.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

Matthew XXIV : 17 and 19.

The application of this parable is not left to conjecture. We are told at the outset that the kingdom of heaven is like unto it. The kingdom of heaven, however, is a somewhat ambiguous phrase. Sometimes in scripture it means the home of the blessed beyond, and is synonymus with the Holy City and the New Jerusalem. At other times it is employed to mean the church on earth in which God's regal authority is recognized, and over which He reigns by His revealed law and by the influences of His Holy Spirit. In the text it is used in a sense widely different from either of these. It is here very clearly employed to point out the economy of grace or the rule of God's government over man in the gospel dispensation. This being the meaning of the phrase "kingdom of heaven" it follows that the parable is designed to teach the principle upon which God distributes His favors among men, and the measure of responsibility which men are under to God.

The man in the parable, who, having decided upon a journey into a far country, called his servants together and distributed among them his goods to be held in trust until his return, is readily recognized to be the Lord Jesus Christ, who "when He ascended up on high gave gifts to men" and who also has required of His servants that they should occupy "till He come again."

The first thing that attracts attention is that something was given to each servant without an exception. No one was deemed worthy to be intrusted with all, nor was any one so insignificant or so incapable as to have nothing intrusted to his care, but when the division was made it was found that each received his portion in due season. So God, in the infinitude of His mercy has passed by none. He has not chosen an elect few to be the special favorites of heaven. He has not passed by a reprobate multitude, but he has graciously given a "manifestation of the spirit to every man to profit withal."

As in grace so also in creation and providence have His gifts been universally bestowed. He has given to every man some mental or moral endowment capable of being developed and improved. Each has been placed where he had or might have had some influence for good. There is a great

deal to cause sighs and murmurs in the world, much of it men have brought upon themselves, but even when providence has been most sparing in its gifts, still there is always some cause of gratitude, for God's sun shines alike upon the evil and the good, and His rains descend upon the just and the unjust.

But again it is to be observed that the master of the servants gave to each a different amount in trust. To one he gave five talents, to another two and to another one. It needs no argument to prove that the gifts of God are also thus unevenly distributed. It is said that there are no two things in nature alike, no two stars in the sky, no two leaves in the forest, no two flowers in the valley, and no two grains of sand on the seashore. Certainly there are no two men alike. There are no two that look alike, none that walk alike, and none that speak alike. Great as are their physical differences the diversity of mind and heart is greater still. Mental conditions and gifts are of all grades, from the babbling idiot and the raving maniac up to the soaring genius of a Plato and the all-comprehensive grasp of a Newton. Hearts also are of every mold, from those that turn sick at the death of a fly to those that can gaze unmoved as a stone upon groaning, dying armies.

The distribution of property has been no less partially made. In many a palace still may be found the rich man clothed in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day, and at his gate Lazarus, begging to be fed with the crumbs that fall from his table. Some are born heirs to a throne, others to a hovel. Some are born heirs to continual misfortune, and others to uninterrupted prosperity. I know that much of the inequality in life is attributable to the improvidence and folly of men themselves, but after making all due allowance for the differences of human origin, it still is tremendously true that providence does not bestow its favors with an even hand. While God gives something to everybody He does not give to all alike.

We next observe in the parable the rule of distribution. The Master did not thus deal out his talents through caprice or favoritism. It was not by chance, nor blind fate, nor arbitrary decree that the servants each received a different trust. It is said that he delivered to every man according to his several ability, and thus it is that God bestows His gifts on man. I verily believe that as a rule the influence, the power and the wealth of the world so far as they are the gifts of providence have been bestowed upon men according to their

“several ability”—have been placed in the hands of those who are most competent to hold them. I say in so far as they are the gift of providence. But all the rich and mighty were not made so by providence. The man who robs his neighbor of his goods either by theft or fraud was not made rich by God. The man who climbs to power and influence by bribery and wrong owes his place not to providence but to the devil. These men may be the most incompetent and worst of mankind, for it requires only the lowest order of talent to cheat and steal. Such men will be very likely to abuse wealth in debauchery, and power in oppression, while others of far greater ability will remain the objects of their contempt and the victims of their cruelty.

To these the rule does not apply. Having forsaken trust in providence and having sought fortune in contempt of God’s law, God leaves them “to work out their own damnation with all greediness.” But the men who climb to seats of power, wealth and influence in a legitimate way according to the laws which providence has established for the government of society are those, as a rule, who will use these talents to the best advantage. Here and there you may find an exceptional case, but it is easy to see that in general the men who can win

wealth and power legitimately must be those who can handle them to advantage. Some cases there are of inheritance where desert of such a trust is entirely wanting, but in such cases the possession will soon change hands and will link itself to worth and ability. The hue and cry which we so often hear about the caprice of fortune, about the unworthy rich man, and the deserving poor man, about the imbecile ruler, and the sagacious subject, is only the whine of ambition or disappointment and has a narrow foundation in truth.

The poor and the humble no doubt are honest in their opinion when they think that had they wealth and power they would employ them to bless man and to glorify God. But dispositions often change when fortune changes, and experience does not show that the men who promised most while they were poor and unknown have done any better than others when they became rich and great.

I do not believe that an equal number of men could be found who would take the wealth of the honest rich men and employ it as well as it is now employed. I cannot believe that the men who have never been able to reach power and place in society would make as good rulers if suddenly elevated as those who have honestly succeeded in struggling up to these summits.

God's gifts are not scattered by chance or caprice but according to economical laws. He bestows His talents where they will be likely to bring Him the best return. He divides them among men "according to their several ability."

Why God has given to men, not only different possessions, but also different abilities, I do not know. We cannot tell why He has created some, men, and others, angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim. We must be satisfied to know that the potter hath power over his own clay to make different vessels for different posts of honor. We had no claim upon God whatever and if therefore He has given us being at all we ought to be thankful. We have no more cause to complain that we are not gifted with the endowments of some other man than we have to complain that we were not created angels or archangels. Believing "it is lawful for God to do with His own as He will," we ought to accept the situation His providence has assigned us with thankfulness and make the best of it. For aught we know, it may appear in the light of eternity that what were regarded as limited abilities on earth, are really the loftiest endowments for heaven. The men who are away down in the scale of society, may be of greater importance in the eye of God than those whose fame is sounded far and near.

Let it never be forgotten that Jesus, when he became a man passed by the regal palace and the noble mansion, the halls of greatness and the studios of learning, and took upon himself the form of a servant and chose a manger for his birthplace.

But upon whatever principle God may vary the gifts of physical, mental and moral capacities, this one thing is revealed, that the talents which he intrusts to each man's care are as a rule proportioned to his capabilities. He does not impose a burden greater than our strength. He does not allow us to be tempted above that we are able to bear, but He carefully weighs out each man's talents in the balance of his own abilities.

Turn we now from the talents committed to our care, to the measure of man's responsibility to God. We are told in the parable that "after a long time the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them." Days, weeks, months and years had rolled away and still the master did not come. Talents had increased and multiplied, the servants had grown gray in the discharge of their trust and over the old mansion the ivy had stealthily crept and the moss had quietly nestled down. The question had probably been asked at the evening fireside, "Will he ever come back?" and now and then it had been whispered that travelers sometimes find a grave far away from their home.

Still the old servants with tottering steps shuffled down to the exchange and bargained and traded with their lord's money as before. They had held the talents so long and in the majority of cases had increased them so much that they began to appear like their own. The probability that the master would not return to require an account grew stronger every day until at length they almost ceased to think either of the return or the reckoning.

One evening, after many long years, as they are sitting together, talking over the investments and speculations of the day, the heavy tramp of the camel is heard in the distance; it comes nearer and nearer. The old servants turn their dulled ears and listen intently. By and by they detect the sound of human voices, and the tread of other beasts of burden. Presently as these sounds die away there is a heavy rap at the door. One totters forward with a staff in his hand to answer the calls and throws open wide the door. A stranger enters and uncovers his face, when lo! the master and his servants are standing face to face!

Recognition and salutations are scarcely over before the servants observe a wondrous change in their feelings. But an hour before, and they had fancied themselves proprietors of the accumulated tal-

ents in their possession; now, all such notions are gone, and the feeling of a servant comes back and with it the certainty of a reckoning on the morrow. The morrow dawns, and each man in turn is required to appear before his lord bringing with him both his talents and his accounts to answer the question how he has used and how much he has improved the trust committed to him. The first one came and said: "My Lord, thou deliveredst to my care five talents. I have traded with the same, have squandered nothing, and by economy and care have doubled the amount; lo! here are ten talents." The second one then came and said: "My Lord, thou deliveredst into my hands only two talents, it was a small amount, but I have done the best I could with it. I have labored under many disadvantages in the market because of the smallness of my capital, but I have tried to make up by labor and economy what I lacked in means, and behold I have doubled the amount; lo! there are four talents."

The master smiled and said, "Well done, good and faithful servants; you have been faithful over a few things, lo! I will make you ruler over many things." Then the third servant came with downcast looks and carrying a napkin in his hand, and said: "My Lord thou only gavest to me one talent

when thou gavest so many more to my fellow servants. It was so small a sum, and so little could be done with it, that I did not think it worth my while to try. Besides, I knew thee to be a very severe master and expecting to be called to give a strict account for that one poor talent, I went and buried it to be certain that I should not lose it. Lo! there thou hast thine own." The master frowned and said, "Take the talent from him and cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The kingdom of heaven, we are told, is like unto this. Men take the talents which God has given them and by their increase become great and rich and mighty, while the Judge of all the earth tarries in a far-off country. Years roll away and God does not break in upon their schemes to demand a reckoning. Because He does not execute judgment speedily, by and by they begin to forget that they are servants only, and to ignore their accountability. We talk of our houses and lands, our flocks and herds, our silver and gold, our position and influence, our genius and learning, our power and place, forgetting that we ourselves have been bought with a price, that our possessions are only held in trust, and that for all these things God will bring us into judgment. We go on improving,

abusing or burying the talents which God has given us until age weaves his silver threads into our hair and our bending forms are thankful for a staff on which to lean, and still the Master does not come.

He has left us in unquestioned possession of our talents so long that we cannot realize that we shall soon be called to deliver them up. He has tarried so long that we little dream he is near at hand to demand a reckoning. But just then, when we are dreaming of ease, or gain, or glory, "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." Brother servant of the living God, it will not be long at the longest until the heavy tramp of death will be heard approaching your door and mine. Voices from a far-off country will break upon our dull hearing, whispering, "Come away;" the knock of a cold and bony hand will be felt at our hearts, and in the next moment we shall find ourselves face to face with God.

O, how our possessions will dwindle away when we find ourselves in the presence of the Master until we shall be glad to take the lowest servant's place! But while our humbled spirits gaze upon our Lord He changes to a Judge, a great white throne rises, which in stately pomp He mounts; great books containing all accounts are opened,

the spirit world is teeming with inhabitants; the dead, small and great, are ranging themselves before the throne and under the eye of the awful Judge. The recording angel reads in tones that make the mountains shake, and the dead from the highest to the lowest are judged out of those things that are written in the books according to their works whether they be good or whether they be bad. Whether our opportunities have been great or small, whether our talents have been many or few, and whether we have improved them or not, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ to "give an account of the deeds done in the body."

As in the parable so in Christ's great day of account, each man's responsibility will be measured by the number of talents committed to his keeping. The men to whom He has committed five talents—those to whom He has given wealth, position, power, learning, vast opportunities for well doing, extended fields of usefulness—will have a fearful reckoning in that day.

It will then be asked, How many hungry have you fed? How many naked have you clothed? How many sick have you visited and comforted? How many tears have you wiped away? How much influence did you exert for God and His Christ?

What kind of an example did you set to those who looked up to you for guidance? What did you do to strengthen the weak and enlighten the ignorant? How many erring brothers did you reclaim, and how many souls did you win for Jesus Christ? It will not do to answer, We did as much as some others did; I gave as much as my poor neighbor; I exerted as much influence and set as good an example as my humble and weak brother; I bore as much testimony and won as many souls for Jesus as that weak minded and ignorant disciple of the Master.

Your duty is not measured by another man's performance but by the number of your talents and the opportunities you had for exercising them. That poor, weak, ignorant brother had but one talent; you had five, and God requires of you five times as much as of him. Happy will it be for those whom God has favored most if, in the great day of reckoning they can render such an account as shall earn from the Master the plaudit, Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, behold I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

On the other hand those that were gifted with but one talent will not be excused for doing noth-

ing because of the smallness of their gifts. We dare not make reply that our lot was so humble and our abilities so small that we could do nothing for Christ. There is none so weak and humble but he can do something. It is a small thing to wipe away a tear, to speak a kind word, to take a trembling sinner by the hand and lead him to his Savior. The smallest one can do this; at least he can try, nor will he pass the judgment uncondemned without the effort.

It will not do to answer that because we could not do what others did we became discouraged and would not do what we could. God does not ask of you what others did of greater ability, but simply what you are able to do. Of him to whom little is given little will be required. The wren is not expected to sing like the lark nor the beetle to soar like the eagle, but the wren can chirp her rude song to her nest while the lark fills all heaven with song, and the beetle can flutter and buzz while the eagle flaps the clouds beneath his broad wings. And thus, ye little ones in Christ, while you can never bring ten talents to lay at the feet of Jesus, you can improve your one, and this is all the Master asks. If you have yearned to rival others in some great deeds, and have failed, so much the more you ought to strive to do the little that is

required. If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather than when he saith wash and be clean. O, there are thousands in the church to-day who do nothing, because they can do no great thing. Because they cannot give dollars, they will not give cents; because they cannot lead they will not follow; because they cannot speak in public, they will not speak in private. If every member would but do something, however small, do just what he could, the church would know no want and the ark of the Lord would move forward. God will have a reckoning for thousands for burying their one talent.

Some there are who seem to think that to keep what God has given them is all that is required. They never tell their experience, they never give of their money, they never use their influence to lead others to salvation. They live for themselves and in themselves; in other words, they wrap their talent in a napkin and bury it in the earth. They forget that not to increase is to diminish, not to give is to lose. The talent that was buried in the earth was not the same when the Master called for it. Time had had his corroding fingers upon it and had wasted it. The very seclusion that was meant to preserve it had slowly been eating it up.

The spring that is always pouring out its waters to bless others, is always full and fresh and sweet, while the pool that hoards and never gives becomes green and putrid and soon dries up. Our talents, be they one or five, were not given us to keep but to improve, and when the Master comes He will ask more than He gave. Woe will be to him who then digs up his buried treasure and can only say "There, Thou hast that is Thine." Aye, and before that final day shall come he may be startled to hear an authoritative voice say "Take the talent from him and give it unto him that hath ten talents."

It will not do to throw the blame of our failures upon God and say with the slothful servants, "I knew thee that thou wert a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown and gathering where thou hast not strown and I was afraid and went and hid thy talent in the earth." The very charge of severity we bring against God is our own condemnation and the Judge of all the earth will answer us as did the Master in the parable, "If thou knewest that I would be so exacting; if you dreamed—what you should have known was not true—that I would be unreasonable in my demands, you ought for that very reason to have labored the more that the in

crease might be greater. Out of your own mouth you shall be condemned."

Such an excuse will not pass current in the day of final account. God will not turn and say, "Thou fearful and timid servant, your fears were unfounded but they shall serve to excuse in part at least the want of improvement in your talent." No, no. His piercing eye shall see through the flimsy veil of deceit and His answer shall apply the true and proper names to the real cause of talent unimproved. With wrath He will answer, "Thou wicked and slothful servant; take the talent from him and cast him into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

God has given unto every man some talent, and to each according to his ability, and from every soul He will require an account. Rich and poor, small and great, old and young, must bring their talents forth and pass the reckoning. There is no escape, there is no excuse. The talents, whether few or many, must be improved and the return rendered to God must be in proportion to the number of advantages and opportunities conferred. Ours is a sacred trust, and in the fear of God must we discharge it. O, fellow-servants of the same great Master, let us daily strive so to use and so to improve the little or the much that has been in-

trusted to our keeping, that when the books are opened and the reckoning is made, we may hear the awful Judge proclaim, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, lo! I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The Journey to Emmaus.

THE JOURNEY TO EMMAUS.

What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad?—Luke XXIV : 17.

It often happens now as in the past that our greatest blessings come to us in disguise. The redemption of our race covered the world with gloom instead of glory at the time it was accomplished. The little band of disciples who constituted the church at that time, stood around the cross with hearts breaking and eyes streaming with tears while Jesus ransomed man from death; and when the work was complete and sin's last fetter had been dissolved in his warm blood, as He lifted his eyes in triumph and shouted "It is finished," instead of loud hallelujahs and deafening shouts of rejoicing from shore to shore, the earth shuddered and the church groaned. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," and the world has long turned to Him for illumination, yet when He was lifted up above the world instead of flooding it with light we read "there was darkness over all the land." A man can be blinded by excess of light as well as by its absence, and it not unfrequently happens now as it did then, that God's salvation comes to us in a

form that blinds us and for the moment leaves us covered with darkness.

Almost every discovery, either in science or art, at the time it is made, gives rise to more sorrow and apprehension than joy. Men blindly imagine that any change the end of which they cannot see must forebode evil. The introduction of a new machine into any of the arts is usually regarded by the masses as the forerunner of starvation and ruin. The discoveries of science very commonly shake the world of mind like an earthquake and men imagine that they are so many infernal machines for blowing up religion. Yet art marches forward and science clears her eagle vision and peers farther into the unknown and all the while the race advances and faith knits her muscles in a firmer hold upon the cross. The fact is all truth is God's truth and every real discovery is simply bringing God nearer to man. Every new truth thus laid bare will necessitate a readjustment of human relations or a reconstruction of human beliefs, but it will do this simply because it lifts man to a higher plain of living. The sea captain who, on the deck, adjusts his glass to sight a vessel on the distant horizon will find that glass quite out of focus if he ascend the mast and from its top levels his gaze to the horizon. As he climbs higher the

field of his vision grows broader and the horizon recedes to a greater distance. Objects now become blurred and indistinct with the old adjustment of the lenses, and if he would see clearly now over the whole field of the waters he must readjust his glass. But this change in the instrument through which he looks, compelled by the new elevation which he has attained, will neither injure his sight nor destroy the objects which before he saw—it will only enable him to look farther and to bring the distant unseen into view.

Every secret of nature which man can unlock is a treasury of wealth to our race and men will ultimately be made happier and better by it, but it often comes as a blessing in disguise and for a while we do not recognize it as a friend as we walk along life's pathway and are sad. It takes some time to get our mental vision adjusted to the new situation and until then our sight will be blurred and we shall "see men as trees walking." The disciples thought themselves orphans when Christ died, while the truth was, as they afterward clearly learned, through that death they became the sons of God. It was because they failed to recognize the deep import of the crucifixion that their faith faltered and their courage gave way. They were

not alone in that experience—the whole world of mankind has always “walked and been sad” because we fail to interpret God’s meaning aright in the unfolding events around us.

Another truth which we learn from this passage is that the two disciples on their way to Emmaus failed to recognize Jesus Himself when He spoke to them and walked with them. Somewhere on the journey Jesus joined Himself with them; whether they overtook Him or whether He overtook them, or whether He entered the road which they were traveling from some intersecting path just as they were passing that point, we are not told. In some quiet way which did not startle them or excite their curiosity, He fell in with them and joined in the conversation by asking the question which constitutes the text, viz.: “What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk and are sad?” But though they walked and talked together for a considerable distance, still the disciples did not even guess who the stranger was whose fiery words made their hearts burn within them.” It is said in the narrative that “their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.” But we are not to understand by this that they were supernaturally blinded for the purpose of preventing this recognition or that any

change took place in their powers of vision whatever. Mark gives us the secret of their not knowing Christ in his gospel. He says "He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country." It was because He came to them in another form from that to which they were accustomed that they failed to recognize Him, and their eyes were holden only in the sense that they did not pierce the disguise and discover beneath the new form their old Friend and Master. We say to-day that a man is blind who does not see through flimsy disguises and recognize familiar objects, or that he is deaf if he does not detect a familiar voice, although it is changed for the purpose of deceiving him. By such expressions we mean simply to charge the man with stupidity for not detecting the disguise and discovering the real presence. This, I take it, is just what Luke means when he says their eyes were holden that they should not know Christ, he means to say that they ought to have known Him at once, notwithstanding His changed form, and that they were downright stupid for not recognizing Him, and not that there was any real spell put upon their sight to prevent their knowing their Lord. When we remember that it is almost certain Luke was one of the two disciples it will not seem strange or harsh for

him to declare their stupidity in not detecting their Lord. He condemns himself no less than Cleopas for being so blind. Now that he has recognized the risen Christ he cannot understand how they could have failed to know him as He walked and talked with them by the way.

At first thought we are inclined to agree with Luke in condemning the two disciples. It does seem as though men who had known Christ so well before His death ought not to have been so slow in recognizing Him after His resurrection. Even if His physical appearance and dress were greatly changed, still when He expounded the Scriptures at so great length to them they ought to have detected something in His voice or in His mode of teaching by which to identify Him.

Let us not be too hasty, however, lest in our judgment of them we condemn ourselves. The simple fact of their not recognizing Christ in his altered form had never been recorded in God word but that it expresses a deep spiritual truth underlying all human nature. There is a spell upon all our souls and all our eyes are holden so that we do not know Jesus when He comes to us in another form. He is walking with us along life's dusty road and talking with us every day until our hearts burn within us, and we do not think that we have

been in company with God because He did not assume the form that we expected. No form is natural to God—He is a Spirit without body or parts—and when He assumes any form it is only for the purpose of coming into communication with us. He can assume one form as well as another, and we ought not therefore to look for the Divine Presence to manifest itself always in the same way. Sometimes He indicates His presence by “a still, small voice,” at another time He comes as “a rushing, mighty wind.” Now He moves as a pillar of cloud and of fire before Israel and anon His presence is manifested by “the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees,” but wherever His disciples journey in some form He walks with them. Jesus said “Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” We are such children of sense that when we have become familiar with one form of Divine influence and teaching we overlook the Savior’s presence and fail to recognize His voice when He comes in another form.

Men of science can detect God’s footprints in the rocks and can read His law written in matter itself all over the material universe; but when they come to this old sacred book their eyes are holden that they do not know its author; when God in-

spires men and speaks through human lips they do not recognize His voice. They claim that He has revealed His will and ways in the record of the rocks, but when Moses comes down the mountain with the tables of stone containing the law, the form of the revelation is so different from what they are accustomed to that they do not recognize its Divinity. And, on the other hand, the man who has learned to commune with Christ through His holy word and through the influence of the Holy Spirit, who has been accustomed to meet Him in the seclusion of the closet or at the altars of the Church, can scarcely realize that it is the same Jesus who walks with him along the highway of life making his heart burn within him while engaged in the secular affairs of life. If the form of the Master's presence be altered, He will talk to Him and not know Him. We are so stupidly narrow minded that we imagine Christ can come to us only in one form and speak to us only in one way. In one of Raphael's paintings the whole back ground is made up of a cloud of angel faces, and so, were our eyes not holden, go where we might, look where we would, we would see Jesus everywhere. Now, as on the road to Emmaus, He is speaking to us as we walk and are sad, but how slow we are to recognize the voice. He speaks as

clearly and as loudly to us through His providence as through His word or Spirit, but very often we do not know Him when He comes in this form. When He comes as an angel of light and breathes health and peace and prosperity into our homes we readily recognize Him as our Lord and bow down in thanksgiving before Him. But when He comes in "another form" and there is a crash in our business, or our health gives way or our plans and purposes are thwarted, or our loved ones are snatched from us and we move with muffled footsteps through the house and start to hear our own breathing, how slow we are to believe that it is Jesus, as we walk and are sad.

I am not speaking of the miseries which men bring upon themselves by the violation of God's law but of those which come upon us by the ordering of a providence which no human foresight and effort can avert. Sorrow is a part of God's government of a fallen world. It has as large a mission as joy in removing the curse of the fall and restoring the image of God in man. It takes night as well as day; storm as well as sunshine, to ripen the harvest for the garner; and so it takes tears interwoven with smiles, sorrow commingled with joy to prepare the soul for its home in heaven. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through

suffering, and we who make up the rank and file of His army will have to tread in His footsteps. There is a ripening, a mellowing and a sweetening influence which comes from sorrow and which comes from nowhere else that moulds the soul into the Christlike. God does not willingly afflict us—"whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth"—if He comes to us mantled in darkness it is because He sees that our souls need the shadow to bleach them white. If He comes to talk to us while we walk and are sad it is because in that mood His words will sink down deeper and make more lasting impressions in our souls. But times of sorrow, sadness and tears will come to us all sooner or later in life, and Jesus comes with them to soften and sanctify them to our spiritual good. He never comes nearer and never speaks more sweetly than when we walk in tears and are sad; but tears often blind us to His presence and our moaning and cries drown the tender tones of His voice. May God help us to recognize the Master in whatever form He comes and to know Him in our sorrow no less than in our joy.

Another truth revealed by this passage is that Jesus appears while we are thinking and talking about Him. It was while Luke and Cleopas were

talking about the crucifixion, the burial and the promised resurrection that Christ joined them and asked "What communications are these that ye have one to another." Nor was this an exceptional case. When Christ was made known to them in the breaking of bread at Emmaus, it is said that they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem. Upon their arrival where the eleven were gathered together, the first sound which greeted their ears was "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared unto Simon." In confirmation of the joyful tidings in possession of the eleven, they then related "what things were done in the way and how He was known of them in breaking of bread." "And as they thus spake Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." When Mary Magdalene came to the sepulchre on the morning of the third day and found the body of Jesus gone, she burst into tears. The angel sentinels, touched by her grief, inquired, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Mary answered, "Because they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him." While these words yet lingered on her lips she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but like Luke and Cleopas she did not know Him. Jesus asked, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom

seekest thou?" Mary, mistaking Him for the gardener, replied, "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him and I will take Him away." Then Jesus said in a voice so tenderly familiar and sweet that she could not mistake it, "Mary!" It was enough, and she whispered in rapturous devotion, "Rabboni!" It was while she was talking about Jesus and thinking of nothing else that the Master appeared and spoke to her.

These numerous appearances of Christ while His disciples are conversing about Him indicate a law governing the communion of Christ with His people. He does not always appear when we walk and are sad like Luke and Cleopas. He does not always meet us when we weep and are sad like Mary Magdalene. He does not always reveal Himself in our midst when we are met together and are sad, like the eleven, but He does always come when our thoughts are fixed upon Him and our conversation is about Him. The kind of communion we have one with another has more to do with our spiritual communions than we commonly suppose. There is a deep philosophy in the old saw "Talk about angels and you will hear the rustling of their wings." Conversation coins and exchanges thought and by means of it we get our

scattered thinking into definite shape and into sympathy with those around us. If we talk about Christ, by the very exercise, we shall get clearer views of His character and realize more the need of His coming. Religious conversation thus lifts us up upon a higher plain of thought and feeling and before we know it we are in the immediate presence of Christ; for the intense thought of Christ together with an ardent love for Him is never farther from His real presence than the shadow is from the substance. This thinking and talking about Christ may bring Him no nearer to us than He was before, but it will open our eyes to the fact of a strange presence by our side, and it will unstop our ears that we shall hear whisperings of heavenly sweetness, and it will so warm our hearts that they shall burn within us with a new, strange joy.

I think the men of former times had greater manifestations of the Savior's presence than is granted to the church to-day because meditation and conversation upon holy things were more common then than now. We have more zeal, more energy, more enthusiasm to-day in the church than ever since apostolic times, but we have far less near and clear intercourse between our souls and Christ. Our religion is characterized by intense activity in running the machinery of the church,

and our conversation is all about means and ends, but holy meditation and "the communion of saints" are almost entirely ignored. Is it any wonder, while we are talking about stocks and profits and interest and thinking about politics and business and pleasure that Jesus does not manifest Himself to us in soul enrapturing visions? If we will but drive out the money changers and worldlings from the temple of our thoughts Jesus will quickly enter; and if we will but cleanse our lips and speak of Jesus and His salvation to others, while yet His name is on our tongue His foot-falls will be heard at our side, and He will whisper in our deepest soul, "Peace be unto you." "Wherever two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," said the Master. No matter where the meeting may be held, whether beneath frescoed domes in marble halls, or out along the road to Emmaus with nothing but the blue arch of Heaven overhead—wherever two or three are met in Christ's name, i. e., as Christians for the purpose of Christian communion, there Jesus draws the veil aside and reveals Himself as the fairest among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely. Are there those here who are mourning an absent Christ and who with bowed down heads are asking, "Saw ye Him whom my

soul loveth?" O, brother, go talk about Him to somebody else, and while you recommend Him and His salvation to another He will appear to you until your heart will burn within you.

The manner of Christ's appearing to His people is also indicated in the text and context. The narrative indicates that as the two disciples walked along the road talking over the sad story of the crucifixion and endeavoring to strengthen each other's faith in the resurrection, by and by they became conscious of the presence of a third person. They had been so absorbed in thoughts of Christ and in conversation respecting Him that they did not notice when the stranger joined them nor whence he came. The account reads, "while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them." He came so gently and unobtrusively that before they knew it they were walking and talking with Him as an accepted companion.

The same thing was true in the case of Mary Magdalene. Christ's appearance to her was so natural and unobtrusive that she was not startled in the least. When He came or where He came from she did not know nor did she stop to inquire. She had not seen Him when she came and when she turned away from the angel, lo! He stood be-

fore her, and yet His appearance was so easy that her curiosity was not excited to even inquire who He was. The case of the eleven disciples to which reference has already been made is another in point. They were assembled together and were rehearsing the strange stories of Christ's resurrection which had just been set afloat; "and as they thus spake Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them." No man heard His footfalls, no man saw His approach, yet no man seemed startled by His presence. He did not come there; He simply appeared there and was there without coming. And His presence was so quiet and natural that no man seemed shocked by the discovery.

Appearances like these suggest two questions: First, Where did He come from? and, second, How did He get there? He had not yet, He tells us, ascended to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God. He is still upon the earth, yet by far the greater part of the time between the resurrection and the ascension, He was invisible to mortal sight. We can locate Him when we see Him, but where is He when we cannot see Him? Physical objects diminish in distinctness as they are removed farther from us, and so when Christ vanishes out of sight we think of Him as going away into the distance, and when He appears to His dis-

ciples we think of Him as coming back again. But all physical laws fail when applied to a resurrected Christ. A closed door keeps a human body out of a room, but Jesus appeared in the midst of the disciples, the door being shut. Gravitation holds the human form firmly down to earth, but while Jesus talked with His disciples on Olivet He was parted from them and was taken up into Heaven. And so, contrary to common experience, Jesus appeared without coming and vanished without going. He emerged out of the unseen and melted back into it again at pleasure. There was no distance to be crossed in order to bring Christ into the presence of the disciples. He was there all the while. The unseen, the spiritual, is all around us. It laves us on every side and enfolds us like the atmosphere. Jesus fills the unseen. In Him we live and move and have our being. We need not ascend into Heaven to bring Christ down nor descend into the deep to bring Him up. He is all around us; nor can we escape His presence. His own words are expressive no less of a great spiritual truth than of a consoling promise—"Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." He is here already whether we see Him or not and does not need to come in order to manifest Himself.

But if He be thus always at our side, why do we

not always realize His presence? How does He catch the attention of His people and manifest Himself to them at one time and not at another? There is mystery here which we cannot fathom. The how and why we do not know. The soul needs a very delicate adjustment to perceive the Master's presence. There is an intimate relation between our internal state and Christ's appearance to us which we do not fully understand. We only know that He is present all the time and that now and then that presence manifests itself to our consciousness and presses itself upon our thought with tenfold its usual intensity. There is music always in the air and everywhere. It is all around us when we wake and when we sleep. An organ does not make music—it only wakes it from its sleep as it floats on the wind. It brings it out of the world of silence and makes it audible to the human ear. But even the organ will not reveal the presence of music unless human fingers strike its keys aright. There must be a certain adjustment of the player and the organ to the surrounding air with its latent harmonies or the music will never emerge from the land of silence. Jesus dwells in the realm of the unseen all about us and our souls are the organs through which He manifests His presence, but it is only as God's Spirit now and then strikes the full

chords on these harps of a thousand strings that we become conscious of His presence and hear Him whisper, "Peace be unto you."

I think in almost every case the penitent soul seeking Jesus expects Him to descend from Heaven in blessing. He thinks of Jesus as removed from Him and is looking out of Himself to catch a glimpse of His absent Lord. But when at last He sees Jesus as his Savior, the Master's appearance is just as it was on the road to Emmaus or in the assembly of the eleven on the day of His resurrection. All at once, without coming, mysteriously He is there, and the first feeling is very commonly one of surprise that we did not recognize His presence before. How He got there or when He came we do not know. "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it came nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Ah, the secret truth is, God's Spirit just then struck the chord within our souls which sounded "Thy sins be forgiven thee," and quicker than thought all the music of Heaven was ringing in our ears. Our souls that instant became adjusted to the spiritual and unseen, and Jesus' beauteous face emerged from the invisible and beamed in tender-

ness upon us. As it was then at the beginning of the journey, so it will be all along the road. While we commune with one another and reason about the great salvation, our spirit vision will become sensitive to the unseen and ever and anon Jesus will appear at our side and the warmth of His presence will make "our hearts burn within us."

Patience Confiding in God.

PATIENCE CONFIDING IN GOD.

Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.

—Exodus XIV : 13.

These words were spoken by Moses to the children of Israel as they stood on the shore of the Red Sea. In obedience to his command they had fled from Egypt. He had promised that if they would break away from their bondage and flee from their old masters he would lead them to a land of freedom. Eagerly they had embraced the promise and shook off their fetters. Egypt was soon out of sight and their taskmasters were left far behind. Trusting in their fleetness of foot they already exulted in their newly acquired liberty and little dreamed that they would be overtaken by their old masters. They were pressing eagerly forward expecting soon to reach the land of corn and wine, where they would revel in abundance and forget their former bondage.

But as they press forward they at length discover in the distance the Red Sea lying directly across their path and forbidding their further progress. Before this obstruction they come to a dead halt, when lo! a messenger arrives bringing intelligence

that the Egyptian army is in hot pursuit and not far in their rear. In a moment Israel, disheartened and dismayed, imagine all their efforts, after freedom to have been in vain and are ready to give up the struggle in despair and go back to their bondage. It was then that Moses spake these words of assurance. He had a deeper insight into Divine things than the Israelites and knew better what God's salvation meant. It is said that God "made known His ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. They only saw what God did; Moses was taken behind the curtain and saw why He did it. Israel, though escaped from Egypt, carried much of their bondage along with them. They imagined themselves free, while they were slaves to impatience and fear and knew little of the liberty of God's dear children. They talked loudly about the salvation of God, while they were trusting only in their own efforts for escape and had no faith whatever in God's providence beyond what they could see. They could fight or work or fly, but to stand still and wait and calmly trust was a deep lesson in spiritual emancipation which they needed yet to learn. Moses let them exhaust their strength and led them to where they could go no further, where human effort was utterly without avail; and then said to them in sub-

stance, you have done all that you can and your salvation is not yet complete, but don't be discouraged. "It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." This deliverance is not of your procuring. It is God who undertakes to accomplish it. Having done all you could, now rise to a calm and settled confidence that God will surely bring it to pass. "Fear ye not; stand still and see the salvation of the Lord."

The Israelites are not alone in the experience here described. Perhaps every Christian to a greater or less extent has at times found himself in their situation and we, therefore, no less than they, need to take to heart the doctrine of this text.

It is not easy to describe in words the state of mind and heart portrayed in this passage. No single word in our language will express all that is intended to be conveyed. The Israelites were to be patient, they must wait. They were to be passive, they must stand still. They were to be confident, they must not fear the result. And finally they were to trust in God, they must look to see the salvation of the Lord. I know not how to define this state of soul better than by calling it Patience confiding in God.

A proper understanding of the salvation of Jesus Christ will convince us of the necessity of this com-

plex Christian grace all along the journey of life. Moses was not commissioned simply to get the Israelites out of Egypt and into the promised land. If that had been his only mission he might have taken a short cut across the desert and accomplished his work in a few weeks or months at longest. The great work to be done which took forty years was the disciplining and developing of character which would fit them for the promised land. So also the great work which Christ came to accomplish was not simply to forgive our past transgressions and at last to receive us into Heaven. He came not to save men in their sins, but from their sins. The great object of Christianity is to restamp the Divine image upon human souls. Christian living means "growing up into Christ our living head in all things." It means the development of character after a certain well defined model. We are all building character of some sort. But the Christian seeks to form a character not after the model of Confucius, or Buddha, or Mahomet, but to copy the character of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Such a character is not simple, but complex. It consists not of a single virtue, but embraces all the virtues and all the graces. A man's salvation is far from complete when he has exercised faith

only. Faith breaks the fetters of his bondage and sets him free, but there is a long march before him and many phases of experience before he reaches the land of promise. He must now "add to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness charity." It takes not one or a few of these, but all, to form a Christlike character.

Moreover the Christian character requires not only that we possess all these virtues in kind, but that we have them in a high degree. A man who has only a little faith and a little peace and a little temperance and a little patience does not realize the ideal Christian. Peter after enumerating the catalogue of Christian graces just given, continues: "For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Everywhere we are exhorted not to be satisfied with stinted measure but to seek it pressed down, shaken together and running over. Are we fruit-bearing branches? Jesus says "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples." Are we seed-sowers? God says "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters." Are

we sent forth to convert the world? "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever." Are we to be beneficent. Jesus says "Give to him that asketh thee and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." The inner life must correspond with the outer and must abound in its graces as the external life does in its works. We are not to be satisfied with a little faith. Our constant prayer must be, O, Lord, increase our faith." We are not to rest in a feeble hope. Our hope is to be "like an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast." It is not enough to have cold charity. God says "have fervent charity among yourselves." We are not to look for a little peace. But "the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus." The Christian standard of righteousness is no narrow one. God exclaims "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."

We are to be new creatures in Christ Jesus, but we are not to remain simply babes. We are to grow up and become men and women in Christ. We are to be made alive from the dead, but ours is not to be a sickly, feeble life. Jesus came into the world that we might have life and that we

might have it more abundantly. God's ideal of Christian character is not a vineyard with here and there a single grape, however perfect, nor with some stunted little clusters, few and far between. He looks for the fruits of the Spirit in all their variety, mature and abundant, to hang in great purple bunches like the grapes of Eschol.

The virtues which make up a Christian life must not only be many and abundant but they must be graceful and beautiful. There is some good fruit that is rusty coated, but it is very uninviting. The velvet coat and blushing cheek add very much to the attractiveness of the peach and the apple. So the fruits of the Spirit are not simply rugged, austere moral virtues—they are virtues covered with down, tinted with the maiden's blush or mellowed into purple. A Christian life is not only a correct one, but it is also a winsome and attractive one. There is something so delicate and graceful in it that it transforms moral virtues into Christian graces. There is sometimes as much in the manner of doing good as in the act itself. Not holiness alone, but the beauty of holiness is the ultimate goal of the Christian race. See how particular the sacred writers are to insist that our lives present no naked virtues, but that they all be clothed with a delicate and appropriate drapery.

"He that showeth mercy," let him do it "with cheerfulness," not reluctantly or gloomily, but radiantly and cheerily. Some men show mercy in such a harsh, brutal way that you feel it would have been a mercy if they had not shown it at all. As Christ's witnesses we are to testify for him. But oh, there is a world of difference in the way in which this can be done. Some people give their testimony so pompously and with an air of so much self-importance that they do their Master's cause more harm than good. Peter tells us how to do it. He says, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

We are commanded not simply to serve the Lord but to "serve the Lord with gladness." We are not to go about it as if it were drudgery and as if we would like to get out of it if we could. We are to bring ourselves into such harmony with the Divine purposes that it becomes our meat and drink to do our Master's will. The true Christian serves Christ as if it were a privilege and not a duty. We are not simply to speak the truth, but to "speak the truth with love." We may speak the truth in anger, in bitterness, in intolerance, in malice. Naked truth may be a dagger to stab a man to the heart. The Christian sheathes it in a scabbard of

love and presents it hilt foremost. Alms-giving is one thing and giving alms after the Christian model is a very different thing. There are many men who give and give liberally to charitable purposes, but who do it in so ungracious a way that their gifts lose half their value. They have the virtue of giving but have never learned the Christian grace of giving. I have known many graceful givers, but I only remember one man who always thanked me for asking him when he handed in his contribution. Here is the Christian model, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity for God loveth a cheerful giver." The ideal Christian character as portrayed in the New Testament is not simply a garden filled with fruits of every variety and in rich abundance, but it is one in which these variegated fruits are half concealed and peep out and glint from beneath a drapery of flowers and leaves.

"The salvation of the Lord" takes in the unfolding of all this complex and ornate character, nor will it be complete until we stand "perfect and entire wanting nothing." Now, if our salvation mean the development and adornment of all spiritual capacity, if it mean the building up of faultless characters and the living of lives that are full

of sunshine and song, it is easy to see that we shall have not only to march and fight, but that we shall also have to stop sometimes and "stand still to see the salvation of the Lord" Patience calmly confiding in God we shall need at every stage of our progress. We shall need it, First, because character building is a spiritual work and on that account we cannot know the precise progress we are making. A ship-builder, who was also a Sunday school superintendent, once said to me that he became discouraged in his Sunday school work because he could not see what he was doing. Said he, "when I start to build a vessel I can calculate just when she will be ready to launch: I can see her grow day by day under my hand and know exactly what progress I am making towards the final result; each nail I drive and each bolt I fasten is just that much towards her completion; but my labor in the Sunday school is all working in the dark. I cannot see the impression that I make and cannot know that there is any progress. What the final outcome will be I cannot tell nor when the work will be completed." "Well," I replied, "you build a ship but you don't build character, though we often use that word to describe our efforts in that direction. Character is a thing of growth and we cannot make anything

grow; we can only remove obstructions and provide favorable conditions, but the force which determines the growth of an oak is in the acorn and that which determines the growth of character is in the soul. When you have done all that you can, you must then stand still and patiently wait and calmly trust in God for the final result. Even physical growth, while we cannot produce it, we can see and measure, but not the growth of the spirit. I can measure my growth from childhood to manhood in feet and inches and can weigh it in avoirdupois, but we have no weights and measures for the soul. We cannot count the fruits of the spirit, nor see them swell in their growth, nor behold them change into the purple and gold of maturity. Secretly and silently the work goes on out of sight and we can never know, therefore, precisely how rapidly we are unfolding into the Divine likeness. We need great patience to calmly wait and steadfastly trust that "He which hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

If we regard the infinite complexity of the work to be done in us we shall see that great patience and long waiting are needed to bring it to perfection. A mushroom will grow in a single night. A reed will shoot up to a towering height in a single

season. But these are simple structures that need to grow only in a few directions. When you undertake to grow an oak, an elm or a sycamore, with their deep reaching roots and wide spreading branches and infinitely complex structures, a century is scarce long enough. It takes sunshine and clouds, winter and summer, whirlwind and calm to knit the woody fibre into the gnarled and knotted muscles of the oak. But a man is vastly more complex than a tree, and the development of the highest style of man will, therefore, be a slow and tedious process. He must grow physically, mentally and morally at the same time and these growths must synchronize and keep pace with each other for the perfection of the one will largely depend upon the progress of the others. Like his Master, he must grow in wisdom and in stature and in favor both with God and man.

The infinite and endless variety of the soul's faculties require that in order to a symmetrical development, there shall be no spasmodic growth, no hot house forcing of one grace at the expense of another, but that slowly and steadily through endlessly varying conditions and experiences the soul should unfold and expand uniformly in all its parts. In a carpet loom with a simple pattern few shuttles are required, and they may fly never so swiftly

and the web grow apace. But in a Goebelin tapestry where many colors and shades are required, and where the figures are endlessly varied, the work goes on with marvelous slowness and many years are sometimes consumed in finishing a single pattern. If the work of grace within us was to copy any human character, we should not have to wait long for its completion, but the likeness of Christ is not woven in a human soul in a day. We shall need patience to stand still and wait to see the salvation of the Lord.

Again, salvation is a slow work because it is to last forever. A great painter was once asked why he spent so much time upon his pictures, and his reply was because I am painting for eternity. If we were building a temporary structure that was designed to stand only for a few years and then be pulled down, we should not need to be very careful how it was put together. We might use the cheapest material and employ the most indifferent workmen; we might hurry and slight the work as much as we liked. A little paint and paper would cover all defects and the building would answer our purpose as long as we wanted it. A log cabin or a frame building is quickly put up; but the Cathedral at Cologne was begun in 1248 and never finished

until 1880. St. Peters at Rome, was more than a hundred years in building. The foundation of the Cathedral at Milan was laid in 1386 and it is not finished yet. These buildings were put up to last; they were designed to be not temporary but permanent. Time must be given for their foundations to settle; each stone must be tested before it is put in its place and the cement must be allowed to harden before you disturb it with a jar. There is no veneering here or surface work of any kind: everything is solid and genuine. Even the pictures which adorn the walls of St. Peter's are not paintings but mosaics let into the solid marble. Paintings were not considered durable enough for this structure which was designed to stand for many ages. A building that goes up quickly will quickly come down. If we want a temple to stand we must be in no hurry in rearing it. We must patiently wait while through many years it slowly rises before us. Well, we are building for eternity. The temple of the soul is the dwelling place of God and is to last while God lives. These marvelous structures of character are to outlive time, they are to survive the shock of death; they are not to crumble even with the roll of eternity. Such structures are not formed in a day. The soul needs time for seasoning and settling. The im-

pressions made upon it must not be mere surface pictures, but mosaics of Divine things let in to its very substance a gem at a time until it is all radiant with images of God and heavenly things. Don't wonder if the work goes on slowly, and don't be discouraged because it takes so long. "Fear ye not; stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." Let patience have her perfect work and remember that it requires patience for all perfect work.

O, how much we need patience confiding in God. How often we become discouraged and grow tired in the work of grace. We have been praying and struggling for twenty years and more and oh, how far we come short of what we meant to become in that time when we started. We thought that in a score of years the seed of the kingdom would have so uprooted the tares of evil that all our souls would be golden with the harvest of holiness. But ever and anon today we find the thistles which have been cut down sprouting and springing up from the root. How long we have been battling with pride and still we are conscious that it is not all yet subdued. Self will, how hard we have tried to overcome it, but every now and then it will rise up and assert itself. Anger we thought we had buried forever, but only a few days ago it had a sudden resurrection. Unbelief we thought we had con-

quered when lo, a whole troop of doubts and fears rush into our souls and take it by storm. We are not hypocrites—we don't mean to be and yet we are not half as sincere as we ought to be. We want to be heavenly minded and we have been fighting through all these years to cast out the world, the flesh and the devil, but we have only half succeeded and realize that our hearts are not fit temples for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

Disheartened with the result, we grow weary and tired of fighting in what seems to be a hopeless conflict and are ready almost to give up in despair. We say we have tried and tried our best and that we have tried for a long time and that it is no use trying we can't become the Christian men and women that we desire to be and can't lead the lives that we want to lead. Patience, brother, struggle on and wait. The Red Sea of difficulty shall yet open before you and you shall march forward dry shod. Your very growth in grace has been the cause of your discouragement. Because the eagle eye of the soul has cleared its vision, your perceptions of evil are keener and you see the defects in your character as never before.

Suppose a mountain peak, tired of its rocky barren surface, should ask God to lift it up to the line of perpetual frost and cover it with a dress of snow.

In answer to that prayer God begins to lift the whole mountain range and the peak feels the upward motion. At once it imagines its exaltation to be almost complete and dreams that its nakedness will soon be covered and it will become a thing of beauty. But a century rolls away and it has only been elevated a few feet, but each winter the snow fall is deeper upon it and remains longer. Thousands of years will roll away before it touches the eternal frost line and when it does it is not covered in a single year with snow. The first winter comes and goes and only its gorges and caves are filled with snow. Its rocky sides are just as angular and jagged as before. Next winter its valleys and ravines are filled, but its jutting crags are uglier than ever just by reason of the contrast. But years roll on and at last it is all covered, but when the summer comes, one by one the old rocks come peeping through the snow and show themselves again. There is no less snow than before. It has only settled down and become more compact. I can easily imagine that peak to become discouraged and can almost hear it say, "What is the use of trying? I have been struggling through all these centuries to get a robe of spotless white. I thought I had reached the goal at last. But alas! my fond dream is dissipated and my ugliness ap-

pears again." Patience, you murmurer, you are being lifted higher every year and by and by you will see your last hard rock disappear forever while clad in everlasting white you will lift your snowy dome against the sky so pure that men shall scarcely know whether you belong to earth or Heaven. O, brethren, our salvation is not yet complete, but it is in progress. The old nature is not yet buried, but a good part of it is out of sight. Be patient and calmly lean on God. He is lifting us into a clearer atmosphere every day. One by one the scars and stains of evil will disappear and at last we shall stand before the Lord without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, clad in garments whiter than snow.

No Scripture of Private
Interpretation.

NO SCRIPTURE OF PRIVATE INTERPRETATION.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.—II Peter I : 19-20.

Two difficulties greatly perplex many good men who are sincerely seeking to know the mind of God. The first is the meagreness of the revelation which God has seen fit to make to us, and the other is the conflict between the declarations of revelation and human experience.

The question will arise in multitudes of inquiring minds, "If the Bible be a revelation from God, why does it not unfold more of the Divine will and character to us, and why does it not make duty and privilege plainer?" Does God mean to mock us with a great volume of revelation which reveals so very little to us? Notwithstanding the light thrown by revelation upon the hereafter, the great problems of the future which have perplexed all ages are not solved by it. A thousand questions which the soul will propound find no answer in the Bible.

And then again when we open the book and

read its thrilling prophecies and lofty promises and then turn to the condition of men around us and behold how little of all the Bible leads us to expect has really been fulfilled in human experience, faith staggers beneath its burden of disappointment and either refuses to believe in the declarations of Scripture or else takes refuge in some mystical interpretation of the promises which robs them of all import and meaning. There are hundreds of thousands of Christian men, to say nothing of the un-Christian world, who have been troubled with doubts and driven to forced and unreasonable interpretations of the Scriptures from one or the other of these two difficulties. We are living in an age of doubt, but these difficulties are not peculiar to the times in which we live. Peter found them in the apostolic church and solved them then and there. It required only a single sentence from his inspired lips to unravel the mysteries of revelation and reconcile God's word and works.

And man who will ponder Peter's explanation, though he may have been wallowing in skeptical quicksands all his life before, will suddenly find revelation hardening beneath him into a granite rock on which his faith can plant itself and stand secure and triumphant. He declares that our difficulties in regard to the meagreness of the dis-

closures made by the Bible arise from our misapprehension of the purpose for which a revelation was given and that we fail to see divine promises fulfilled in human experience because we take too narrow a view and give the promise too selfish and personal an application. Does the Bible fail to reveal to us much of God and futurity that we long to know? Well, says Peter, it was not intended to change earth to Heaven and bring God down to man. It was only meant to be "a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn." God never meant by inspiring holy men of old to illuminate this dark world with spiritual light. With all the light which revelation throws upon them this world and this life will still be dark. The Bible comes to us simply as a lamp to guide us through this world of night up to the gates of the city where night never comes and where there is no darkness at all. Its purpose is something like that of a headlight on a locomotive engine. Get on the locomotive with the engineer and come thundering down the track some dark night. You are passing through a cut now, but the headlight does not shine upon the banks on either side to discover to you their geological formation. And now you are flying over an embankment across a beautiful valley; you may long to know what kinds of flowers and plants are

growing in the fields which stretch away on either hand but the head light leaves the landscape both to the right and the left shrouded in midnight gloom and darts not a single ray to satisfy the curiosity of the botanist. You hurry next through a tangled forest and you can imagine you hear the nimble feet of wild beasts scurrying up the hillsides as you approach. You peer out amid the tangled branches breathless to catch a glimpse of their retreating forms but darkness impenetrable stands like a wall on either side. The headlight of that engine will not shine behind the train to show how far you have traveled, nor on either side, though wonders may cluster all around you, nor above, though the heavens may be full of signs, but it will throw a flood of light down the track before you until the rails will gleam like silver bars. Its one and only purpose is to show whether the track is clear or obstructed in front of you. Even this it will do only to a short distance. It will not flood the track with light to the terminus of the road and thus reveal your destination from the start. It will simply throw its light upon the track ahead sufficiently far for you to discover and avoid any danger that may be there. It is a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn, not to dispel the

darkness, but to guide the traveler through it and out of it.

So the Bible was not given us to teach astronomy, geology, botany or natural history, but simply to throw light upon the pathway of salvation. It does not show us the end from the beginning—a thousand questions concerning the future have no answer in the word of God—but it does light up the path of duty and of privilege at the present, and sufficiently far ahead to enable us to press forward without fear of danger. It is a light shining in a dark place which illuminates the road ahead just as fast as we travel. Do your duty according to the light which you have this hour and when the next hour comes, which is all dark now, you will find the light shining upon it and making it plain. God's word unfolds before us just in degree as we obey it. "If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine." God's word is not a sun in the heavens but a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. It does not dispel the shadows but it guides our feet amid the shadows. It does give us enough to make the path to heaven so plain "that a wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein."

The great questions which divide the Christian world are speculative, not practical. Men will in-

quire and argue about matters which God has not seen fit to reveal and which are not essential to their salvation, often to the neglect of the great practical duties of daily living which are made plain as noon. We lose much valuable time and sometimes our temper also, in discussing the problem how God's sovereignty can be reconciled with human freedom. Revelation is as silent as death on the subject and the probability is that we shall never know until our souls bathe in the light of the throne. Nor is it at all important to our well being either here or hereafter, that we should be able to unravel this mystery now. If, however, instead of undertaking to reconcile human freedom with Divine sovereignty we turn to the practical question of how to reconcile sinners to God, the Bible shines like a calcium light upon the problem and makes its solution easy.

Men get their blood up to fever heat in endeavoring to decide whether the heathen who die without the light of the Gospel will be finally saved, and the Bible is ransacked for proof by either side. But with the exception of two or three incidental allusions to the subject, revelation utters not a word to reward our search or satisfy our doubts. Leave speculation in regard to others and ask the personal, practical question, Will I be saved at the

last? and that book becomes vocal with voices answering every inquiry and furnishing the fullest information. God has given us this volume of truth not to discover to us physical and mental science—that we can find out for ourselves at our leisure, and our souls will not be imperilled meanwhile for lack of such knowledge—He has given us this book, not to satisfy our curiosity upon questions which do not concern us, but simply and solely to illuminate a pathway through life by which man may ascend from earth to Heaven. The miner's lamp illuminates only a narrow circle around him down in the mine and leaves all else in Egyptian darkness. But the circle of light moves with the miner wherever he goes (for he carries the lamp on his cap), so that he can always see a few steps ahead of him and know that he is going aright. If he will but follow that light it will go before him like another pillar of fire and will guide his feet through the dark and intricate gangways and up the shaft until he has reached the surface of the earth and stands bathed in golden sunlight with the blue heavens above him.

This world is one vast deep and dark mine and we are digging and delving in it. Now and then we may discover a gem which sparkles with a strange, sweet light, the lingering lustre of a glo-

rious age that is gone and a glowing prophecy of a brighter world above, but these cannot dissipate the gloom of the vast galleries in which we toil. Heaven's sunlight can never come down here and illuminate these dark chambers, but God can send and has sent His word to us as a light to shine in this dark place to guide our feet along its rugged, winding passages until we reach death and ascend through the shaft of the grave to the beautiful home of God where the flickering light of revelation shall be lost in the snow white glow of the throne.

It is only "a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn," yet blessed forever be God that He has sent it, for without it we must have always remained in the darkness and never have reached the dawn nor the day. All difficulties in regard to the scope of revelation vanish when we understand its purpose aright.

The second difficulty, viz.: That arising from the unfulfilled prophecies and promises of the Bible will also disappear and leave no trace behind if we cease to give them a private interpretation and understand them in all the breadth and depth of their meaning.

The prophecies and promises of God's word for the most part are simply declarations of eternal

principles or are the foretelling of effects which will follow from causes which are already in operation. We err greatly if we suppose that God creates a new law or sets in motion a new cause whenever in Scripture He promises certain blessings to those who shall obey His commandments. He is not arbitrarily granting special favors to one individual or one nation, but is simply revealing a great law by which any other man or nation might attain the same result on the same conditions. For example, the Psalmist sings, "The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell therein forever," and Jesus Himself from the Mount of Beatitudes declares "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Such are the promises and our souls are thrilled as we read them and then we turn us about to behold their fulfillment. What is our disappointment to find that the righteous man here, there and yonder has inherited nothing but poverty and the meek man is pushed aside and down-trodden by the proud and haughty as they rush forward to seize upon possessions and power. There are thousands of the meek and the righteous who live in penury and die in obscurity and still the promise reads that the meek and the righteous shall inherit the earth. There is a wide discrepancy here be-

tween what we read in God's book and what we observe in God's world. How can these differences be reconciled? Simply by taking a broader view. We must cease to give to such prophecies our narrow, private, personal interpretations and must understand them not as promises of rewards to individual men, but as declarations of great general laws which underlie society and which surely, albeit slowly, tend to elevate the meek and the righteous to the mastery and possession of this world.

A principle may be true in the general which is false in many particulars. The soldier on the battlefield often imagines that the army to which he belongs has suffered defeat because his division is compelled to beat a retreat. Could he mount yonder hill and overlook the entire field he might behold many points where his comrades had been worsted in the fight but he would hardly notice these when he beheld a general advance along the whole line of his own army and saw the banners of the foe disappearing in tumultuous flight in the distance. Let the general victory be never so decisive and let it be complete at every point, still all will not share in it. There will be many brave boys who fell in the fight upon whose ears the shouts of victory will never break. We read in the

papers that the army was victorious, but we do not understand that every individual soldier in that army escaped the shot of the foe and came off triumphant. Temporary defeat and final victory are perfectly consistent. Individual failure and general success are very commonly linked together. When, therefore, we read in Scripture that the meek and the righteous shall inherit the earth, we must understand God as disclosing a great general law as wide as the world, and as declaring general and final result, as far-reaching as time, and we must not, therefore, expect the perfect fulfillment of such prophecies in every period of time nor yet that every individual will get his share of the inheritance. There may be dark ages when the unrighteous and the haughty shall strut as lords of the land for awhile and there may be many thousands of God's meek and righteous heirs who will never get their inheritance in this world even where meekness and righteousness are dominant. Still the great general truth that meekness and righteousness are destined to possess and rule this globe of ours is untouched by these temporary and exceptional cases.

The prophecy is of no private interpretation. God would not offer earthly possessions as the reward of Christian virtues, lest any man should cov-

et and cultivate the virtues simply for the sake of the inheritance. God aims to break the shell of human selfishness and get man out of himself. He will not appeal to his covetousness to induce him to become Christian. But He will expand and ennoble the human soul by the assurance that its Christlike virtues are destined to live and triumph in the earth and that while they may bring no reward to their possessor, save that of a good conscience, they shall nevertheless live after him and secure an inheritance of blessing to millions yet unborn. One day is with God as a thousand years. Temporary failure is only the reflux wave of a rising tide gathering strength to roll higher up the beach the next time it comes in. There may be many checks and apparent defeats to the principle, but God, who sees the end from the beginning has said that righteousness shall yet cover the earth even as the waters cover the face of the great deep.

Nor is this prophecy one that makes large demands upon our credulity. Faith need not strain her eagle vision looking down the distant future to behold this result. The history of the past abundantly illustrates and verifies the principle of the supremacy of the Christlike. And a scientific examination of society to-day will convince any one that the spindles are now at work twisting the

cords which shall bind this world into captivity to righteousness and meekness.

There was a time far back in human history when Sampson and Hercules, the Cyclops and the giants were rulers in the earth. Brute force then possessed the globe and the gentle and just went down before it like grass before the scythe.

This was succeeded by the military age in which genius combined and organized physical force for the conquest of the earth. Might then rode at the head of iron-armed and granite-hearted legions and right was not as much as admitted into the councils of war. Men were valued then in proportion to their courage and heartlessness. What were called the masculine virtues but what were in reality only beastly qualities, were the all dominant forces then. The meek, the gentle and the tender-hearted of mankind had no inheritance except an inheritance of contempt and scorn. Might was the only standard of right, and courage and cruelty the qualities that insured the possession of the earth. Even as late as feudal times men entered the lists in deadly combat to decide questions of right and wrong and the one who survived was crowned champion of the right, for no other reason than that he had slain his adversary. Through all these ages there was little to warrant the belief that the

meek and righteous would one day sit upon the throne, the crowned and sceptered rulers of the earth. Socrates appealed to the true and the right and the deadly hemlock draught soon silenced his voice. Jesus came as the embodiment of meekness and righteousness and the cross was his only inheritance. The martyrs lifted up their voices in behalf of the true, the merciful and the just, and brute force tore them limb from limb and waded through their blood.

Yet the leaven of the Christlike was at work all the while softening human nature and transforming the spirit of the age. Greece killed Socrates but could not bury him. The Jews crucified Christ and buried Him, but they could not keep Him in His tomb. He rose again and walked the earth, entering human homes despite bolted doors and penetrating human hearts notwithstanding they were covered with armor of mail. Rome sent the martyrs to Heaven in a chariot of fire, but they still lingered on the earth. "The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church." Three centuries after the Roman Procurator legalized the crucifixion of Jesus, Jesus had conquered the Roman emperor and His teachings became the religion of the Roman empire. Rome herself with all her iron legions has been destroyed, but Chris-

tianity survives to convince the world that there is something "stronger than the strong man armed." The coliseum, where the martyrs were torn to pieces by thousands is all in ruins, while Christian temples surmounted by the cross are adorned with its spoils. The meek and righteous Jesus has inherited the earth which once poured its tribute into the lap of haughty cruel Rome. The spirit of the age in which we live is a marvelous advance upon the past towards the Christlike. The ruler now is not the man who wears the crown and bears the sword. There is a power behind the throne. The signature of the public conscience must be attached to every edict before it becomes a law, and the ruler who dares to defy the common conscience of his people will soon find his people defying him. The meek and righteous are far from being in possession of all that is their inheritance, and yet it is but fair to say that the public conscience to-day is in the main opposed to pride and cruelty and wrong, and on the side of justice, gentleness and meekness. The people may be hoodwinked by designing demagogues so as to mistake injustice for righteousness, but when they discover their mistake they are generally swift to correct it by hurling their deceivers from power. Righteousness to-day inherits the land to such an extent that

every man holds his title to possession and power subject to the approval of the public sense of justice and right. The meek men are coming to the front; the men who trust more in the justice and goodness of their cause than in the strength of their arm; the men who are willing to work and suffer and wait. These are the men who are getting hold of the scepter, whose power is recognized as a mighty factor in the affairs of the world to-day and who are destined to hand this earth down as an inheritance to the children of meekness throughout the ages to come. The poet solved the riddle of the past when he sung:

“Right forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne,
Yet that scaffold sways the future
And behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch o’er all His own.”

Not only history, but science at last confesses that righteousness and meekness must inherit this earth and dwell therein forever. Joseph Cook in one of his Boston lectures has, from a purely scientific standpoint, demonstrated that conscious rectitude and innocency is the one human force to-day before which everything else goes down. It gives

to the human eye and face a light before which not only wild beasts, but also the beastly in man quails and cowers. The solar light as he terms it which shines from the soul and through the face of the meek and righteous makes its possessor a king and commander over men who are destitute of it. They who shall be kings and priests unto God hereafter are kings and priests among men now, not by virtue of a crown and miter, but by virtue of a nature which is all commanding and all ministering.

Science declares that the righteous stand erect and lift their faces heavenward while the consciously unrighteous hang down their heads and hands in gloom. The one is rising in conscious power and the other is sinking smitten with paralysis. This solar light which dimly illuminates the countenances of all saints glowed with intenser luster from the face of Moses when he came down from the mount so that the people could not stand before him, and in Jesus it reached its culmination in the transfiguration before whose glory even the chosen three trembled with fear and were bewildered. Bodily levitation, which is the name given to the upward look and carriage and gesture of the consciously upright, lifted Enoch and Elijah from the earth and carried Jesus from Olivet through the bright cloud into the Heaven of heavens.

These two moral forces which science discovers in the saints have only to be carried up to a climax when the one blazes out into a transfiguration and the other soars aloft in an ascension. These forces inhere in every meek and righteous soul and just in degree as they are developed will they transfigure and elevate the meek and the righteous until all this earth shall become their inheritance and possession. History and science unite their voices and proclaim in tones of thunder that God's prophecy has not failed, but that from the hour the prediction was made, the result has steadily been working out and that the forces are now at work which must ultimately realize the prophetic promise.

What is true of this prophecy is true of every other in God's word. Only cease to give them a "private interpretation," don't limit their fulfillment to the narrow circle of an individual's experience, or of a single nation's history; don't understand them as promises of personal favoritism, but as declarations of eternal principles, the result of whose action God sees from the beginning. Give them scope and time to unfold and they will be found as true to human experience as shadow is to substance. "Heaven and earth may pass away but

one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled."

Divine truth is not a dead thing. It is all life. Man introduced death on the earth and Divine truth fled into Heaven. God sent it back, little by little, in revelations to a dead and dying world, and He means it shall stay here until it has all been incarnated in human form and made to live over again in human experience. This volume of life, with not a promise lost and not one line erased, shall one day walk this earth with human feet, shall act through human hands and speak through human lips. Its work is not done until human experience shall verify and illustrate its every truth. But its work, like that of the leaven, is slow and silent and gradual, and its full living realization therefore can be beheld only by him who is far sighted and sweeps his eye along the ages that are past and that are yet to come.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan his work in vain,
God is His own interpreter
And he will make it plain."

**The Transitory and the
Permanent.**

THE TRANSITORY AND THE PERMANENT.

Whose voice then shook the earth : but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.—Hebrews XII : 26-27.

The idea in this passage seems to be that we are living in a world of change, that all things in nature are moving like a panorama before us and are passing away. This truth, within the narrow circle of observation and experience is one with which we are all familiar. From our childhood we have seen the bursting buds of springtime disappear to make room for the flowers of summer; and the flowers in turn vanish to give place to the purple fruitage of autumn; and the fruit pass away to leave the bare branches a sobbing harpsichord for the bleak winds of winter.

We do not pass far along life's pathway before we become aware that this law of change is broader than the circle of the seasons. Let a young man leave his home, and after an absence of twenty years return. He remembers all things as they were when he left, but he never finds them thus again. The trees have grown larger, the ivy has

spread further over the walls of the old home and the moss is much thicker upon its roof. Father and mother are either in their graves or are gray-haired and wrinkled old people now. Brothers and sisters with whom he romped in childhood are staid, middle-aged persons now with homes and families of their own. He looks around for his playmates of former years, but they have all either passed away or moved away. He seeks his old time haunts, but scarcely recognizes them. The school is not the same. The scholars are all different and another master is behind the desk. There is a new miller at the mill, and the old blacksmith is no longer at the anvil. Slowly and sadly the truth dawns upon him that the past has moved forever out of sight, that life means moving forward ever and that there is no return from former scenes.

Beyond the circle of our observation and experience history teaches on a broader scale the same solemn lesson. Take up any account a hundred years old of our own country and you will be startled to find how antiquated it is. It will describe log cabins, bridle paths and Indian trails where now we find the great cities and steel railways of the west. Where now the steamship on the ocean and the steamboat on our rivers churn the waters

into foam, then vessels with sails or oars crept slowly and lazily along. Where now the lightning flashes thought along the wires across a continent in a second of time, then the old post-chaise came lumbering along with the news at the rate of seventy-five miles in a day. Then people carried tin lanterns along the streets at night and went to bed by the light of a tallow candle, where now our cities blaze with electric light and our homes are radiant with saffron jets of gas. Then the farmer whetted his scythe, and swung his cradle and plied his flail for weeks, where now the mowing and the reaping, and the threshing machine cut down and thresh out a harvest in a day.

Take a wider range of vision and go back to the splendid civilization of ancient times. Read how Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece and Rome in turn dominated the earth with their armies, and how their literature and art made their capitals centers of wisdom and beauty that dazzled the world; and then go search for their greatness to-day. Where are Thebes, and Babylon, and Nineveh now? A heap of ruins on the Euphrates or the Tigris is all that is left of them. A few rolls of papyri, a few monuments covered with hieroglyphics and a few

cuneiform inscriptions engraved upon the rocks are all that remain of their literature.

The people themselves have vanished, leaving nothing behind them but their mummies, which are being utilized to-day as fuel to run locomotive engines. Even Athens and Rome, of more modern date, are rapidly moving out of sight. Pericles and Caesar could they rise from their graves, would not recognize these modern cities as their ancient capitals. The marble of the Parthenon is black with age and its inimitable sculptures are gnawed away by the tooth of time. The Coliseum, gutted of its magnificence, is only a colossal, naked wall, and the palace of the Caesars is now but a subterranean labyrinth. Greek and Roman literature, though still alive, is fading slowly away and now shines only in the libraries of the learned. The nations of the past are gone or are going, and soon only the owl hooting from some moss-covered tower, or the bittern screaming among the wild grass and reeds will tell where they once stood.

The text under consideration, however, carries us farther than history can go, and declares that this same chorus of continual change was sounding through the prehistoric ages to the same solemn measure as now, and that its last note has not

yet been heard. Modern science, groping around among the laws of nature with its dark lantern, has just thrown the light upon the face of this truth of revelation and waked it up from its slumber of ages. Science teaches that our globe was not always what it now is. In the beginning (whenever that was), we are told that the matter of which our earth is composed was so intensely heated and expanded that it floated in space as a vapor, lighter than hydrogen gas. As the ages rolled away this glowing star dust radiated its heat and slowly cooled. As it cooled it contracted its bulk and became more dense until at length the vapor became a liquid. For ages more our earth swept its fiery course around the sun as a red-hot ball of molten matter. In course of time the surface had sufficiently cooled for a crust of rock to form, like the shell of an egg, around the liquid core. Still cycles rolled away, the earth's crust growing thicker all the time, while its outer surface, swept by fierce storms, scathed by wild lightnings, and corroded by an acid atmosphere, was being pulverized into soil. The vapors in the atmosphere at last condensed into water and formed rivers and lakes and oceans, while the dry land grew green with the lowest forms of vegetable life. By-and-by a temperature was reached which made animal life pos-

sible, and at once the coral insect began to build its strange masonry in the deep, and fishes splashed their finny oars as they started to explore the ocean. Age after age new forms of life appeared and old ones disappeared on land and sea, until finally man steps upon the stage of action and calls himself lord of creation. During all these periods the surface of our globe has been rising and falling like the waves of the sea. Vast ranges of mountains have been upheaved and continents have sunk beneath the ocean. Our earth at times has poured out floods of lava to relieve her internal fever, and at others has shuddered in earthquakes from a sudden chill. We talk of the solid earth and think of the ground beneath our feet as something fixed and stable. But the earth's crust is now not more than a hundred miles thick—the merest shell around a molten core, seething and heaving with internal fire. In consequence, this crust is never at rest, but is constantly slowly rising in one place and falling in another, while at times an island suddenly disappears and occasionally, as we have reason to remember, an earthquake jars a continent and shakes a city into ruins.

There is nothing permanent and stable here. Eternal change has kept creation's cradle rocking until now, and will continue to shake the earth for

ages yet to come. The final catastrophe, foretold in Scripture, when our globe shall be wrapped in a winding sheet of fire, is rendered very probable by the discoveries of physical science. A time must come in the future from the process of cooling and contraction, when another gigantic crushing in of the earth's crust will take place. Whenever that occurs it were easy for the continents to be submerged beneath seas of boiling lava, whose fiery waves will burn up every green thing and leave our globe a blackened, smoking slag.

I do not claim that the teachings of science and the Bible are identical. But while they differ widely in details there is a marked general agreement. Both teach that through evolutions and revolutions the earth and man have reached their present state, and that the process is not yet complete. Science digs out of the rocks the evidence that our globe has been shaken and shattered in the past and that it will be again, and revelation looks up to God and cries, "Whose voice then shook the earth but now He hath promised, saying yet once more I shake not the earth only but also Heaven."

Again the passage implies that this change is a real progress from lower to higher forms and is in obedience to God's great law of creation. Just as

a scaffolding is erected and within it the edifice is reared, and then, when the building is complete, the scaffolding is torn down and removed, so in the plan of unfolding creation as any form has served its purpose and become useless it is shaken down and disappears. Evolution is no discovery of science. It was taught in Scripture long before science dreamed of it. It was an inspired pen that wrote, "First the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear." This regular progression from lower towards higher forms marks all the works of God. If we go back to the Mosaic account of creation we shall find that in general the scientific order obtains. Creation did not spring into being all at once at the fiat of God. First God created the heavens and the earth. But they were without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep. It was simply the creation of the elements in a chaotic state. Next God said "Let there be light" and the darkness disappeared. Then came the gathering together of the waters and the division of the earth into land and ocean. Next came the creation of vegetable life—grass, herbs and trees. Then in due time came the creation of fishes in the sea and fowls in the air. Next in order came cattle and wild beasts and creeping things, and finally to crown the series, God created

man in his own image. The record of the rocks and that of the Book are in harmony thus far. Dig down into the mountains and you shall find that the oldest fossils are vegetables, then come marine animals, next birds, then beasts, and then men.

Moreover the rocks will show that the unfolding of each type of being has pursued the same order. In the beginning God commanded each species to multiply, i. e. unfold into all the varieties and forms of which the species was capable. Just as to-day the oak is enfolded in the acorn, so originally God locked up the species with its endless varieties in a single pair. From that primal pair the species was to be evolved, not haphazard, but by a law of regular progression. Go ask the geologist if the oldest forms of life were not the lowest and whether each in turn has not been succeeded by a higher and better form. The first plants upon our globe were flowerless ferns and rushes, and from these, step by step, the flora has unfolded until the earth to-day is covered with a robe of blossoms and the air is burdened with their perfume. The oldest animals were fishes with cartilaginous skeletons and without eyes, as much inferior to a salmon or trout of to-day as Noah's ark was to an ocean steamer of the White Star Line. The rocks are paved with animal and vegetable forms, which are

now extinct, but in every case the form that has vanished was succeeded by another of a higher order. The fossils in the mountains are the garments which nature has outgrown and has laid aside, and they serve to show the humility of her origin and the progress of her growth.

Scientific evolution and Scriptural evolution are wide apart in details, but in their general trend there is substantial agreement. Science starts with dead matter and supposes that it organized itself into some lowest form of life, and that from this first form were developed by natural law, without any creative act, in regular gradation, one form out of another, until at last man was reached. It teaches that a plant produced a polyp, and a polyp a fish, and a fish a reptile, and a reptile a bird, and a bird a beast, and a beast a monkey and a monkey a man.

Scripture on the other hand starts with a separate creation for each class of creatures and then leaves the class to unfold under natural law into many branches, and perfect itself by passing through many forms. God created plants, fishes, fowls, creeping things, cattle, beasts and man, and endowed them with capacities to multiply varieties and improve their condition until the multitudinous species, and endless varieties of flora and fau-

na should be reached, which cover the earth to-day. I submit that until the missing links between widely different species are found, the Scriptural theory is more scientific and rational than the Darwinian.

But while the two theories clash in regard to their teaching respecting the origin of living forms, they agree perfectly in teaching that from the beginning until now there has been a constant evolution and steady progress and improvement. Science expresses its faith in this truth by the phrases, "The struggle for existence," and "The survival of the fittest." Scripture epitomizes its teaching upon this subject by the declaration, "And the word—yet once more—signifieth the removal of those things which are shaken as of things which are made, that those things that cannot be shaken may remain."

But the one great and all important teaching of this passage is that this system of change is not only a progression from lower to higher and better forms, but that it is steadily working toward a final result which shall be changeless and eternal.

Thus far science and revelation have marched side by side, but just here they part company. Science sees no purpose in nature, but only a process. It recognizes no directing intelligence and

knows nothing of a final end. Nature is only a system of endless mutation, evolution, and revolution, with no God at the beginning and no outcome at the end. Science starts with a cloud of star dust floating in space and traces it until it becomes the solid ball which we call our earth. It follows matter then through countless transformations, each rising higher in order of being than its predecessor. It sees successively rising above the ground ferns, and flowers, and polyps, and fish, and reptiles, and birds, and beasts and at last man, highest and grandest of all. But then it sees man die and beholds his body decompose into its original elements. He who was the outcome of all the progressive changes of all the ages and to whose production all lower forms of life have contributed, science sees go back to dust to fatten the soil and nourish grass and grain, and thus in turn himself become food for fish and fowl and reptile and beast. It is as if nature should labor through millions of ages to give birth to a child and then turn round and devour it as soon as it was born.

Human reason revolts at such teaching and demands that for all this plowing and planting and reaping and threshing, there shall be some harvest garnered. It will consent to change through countless ages if at last something permanent shall

be the result. It will agree that life shall pass through a thousand deaths and have as many resurrections if at last an immortal being shall emerge from the grave to die no more. But it utters an unmistakable and uncompromising protest against endless change to no purpose, and against living only for the sake of dying. If materialism can discover nothing which survives the death of man, then the deepest and strongest instincts of human intelligence must turn away from it disappointed and disgusted.

What science cannot discover, but what human nature craves, and human reason demands, revelation comes to supply. It reads that the earth (at first) was without form and void, and that darkness was upon the face of the great deep; it reads of a deluge, and of God's voice shaking the earth in the past, and that other convulsions await her in the future. There is a fiery baptism coming in which "the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the things that are therein shall be burned up." But it does not stop there. There is a method in nature's madness. She has some worthy end in view. The transitory is to be succeeded by the permanent, the temporary by the eternal. Listen to the bugle notes of revelation as they ring out over a world on fire: "Nevertheless

according to His promise, we look for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Paul from the summit of inspiration lets his eagle vision sweep over the ages of the past and down the centuries to come, and then shouts in the ear of a bewildered world God's ultimate design: "Whose voice then shook the earth, but now he hath promised, saying, yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also Heaven, and this word yet once more signifieth the removing of those things which are shaken as of things which are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." When the lightning and thunder are past we are to expect a purer atmosphere. When the blossoms fall, we are to look for the fruitage. When the scaffolding is taken down we are to behold the edifice. When the chrysalis bursts its cerements we are to look for the butterfly rising on golden wings above its tomb.

The microscope and the telescope will make discoveries much farther than the unaided human eye can see, but science with all her instruments can behold only the physical.

Beyond the power of the microscope and the telescope, beyond the power of the crucible and the subtle agents of the laboratory, inspiration discov-

ers the spiritual rising like a Phoenix from the ashes of the physical. Man is the outcome of all nature's workings. He is the summit of the long and ascending plane of life. But the human body is not the man and when it falls in death the man does not die. The body was only the crutches with which the immature spirit supported itself, but when the spirit can stand and walk alone you may bury the crutches out of sight. Don't look in the grave to find your departed loved ones. The disciples made that mistake more than eighteen hundred years ago, and an angel sent by God whispered to them loud enough for all succeeding ages to hear, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, He is risen." No human eye ever saw a man nor ever can. We see his features and his form, but these are only the house in which he resides. That something within which thinks and feels and loves and wills, is the real man, and him no microscope can discover, and over him death has no power. When the body falls in ruin he does not go down into the grave, but rises into a new and higher state of being. The physical is temporary and transitory, the spiritual is permanent and eternal. God has not wrought through all the ages for naught. "The mills of the gods grind slowly but they grind very fine." The mater-

ial chaff and successive hulls which enclosed the precious kernel, one after another have been separated and removed, until at last the grinding is complete—this last covering of flesh and blood is stripped off—and then comes forth the fine flower of a spiritual existence as invisible as ether and as imperishable as God.

Not only does God through successive stages of perishing creations at last reach a stable and everlasting result, but human labor, also, doomed to disappointment all through life, has the promise of imperishable guerdon at last. Our life work is not to travel round a treadmill and end just where we begun, though to the eye of sense this seems to be the only result of living. "We brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out." So far as material possessions and worldly honors are concerned we leave the world just as naked as we entered it. But be not deceived by appearances. While much of our life's work can be shaken and will be removed by death, something that cannot be shaken will survive and remain. If we acquire wealth in houses or land, flocks and herds, gold and silver, it will take to itself wings and fly away. If we win honor and fame, office and influence, power and place, they will slip through our fingers and soon all be gone.

We may subdue and govern nations and build up splendid civilizations, but they, too, will pass away as a dream fades from memory. We may spend our lives in founding vast charities and cover the land with hospitals, asylums and colleges, and these also will crumble to dust, as well as the people who are benefited by them. We may dig deep in science and literature and amass the treasures of mind. We shall thus secure something which death cannot destroy, but we shall find it a useless possession in the land to which we are going. The wisdom of men is foolishness with God, and future discoveries will render our present knowledge foolishness with man also. Hence it is written, "Whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away." But all does not perish. The grave is greedy and devours much of human achievement, but there are some things which even death cannot swallow.

Send a boy to school, and after he has mastered all the studies of the course, the institution may be burned down, the books may all be destroyed, even the knowledge acquired may be of no practical use to him whatever in his lifework, but the thought power and mind-discipline acquired are indestructible and will be his invaluable possession forever.

So man's untiring search after truth all his life and throughout all ages, may or may not be rewarded with clear discovery. All his efforts and sacrifices to establish truth and right on the earth may be defeated, and over his failure error and wrong flaunt their black flag in triumph. But in his search after, and his labors for, the true, there has been developed in him a love of truth which the crash of the universe cannot eclipse or destroy.

So also a life of righteousness may seem to be overwhelmed by injustice and hypocrisy, but above the dark waves of fraud will float like a white albatross the love of justice which is indestructible. Carlyle, the most rugged thinker of the nineteenth century, has said: "The great soul of this world is just. With a voice soft as the harmony of spheres yet stronger, sterner, than all thunders, the message does now and then reach us through the hollow jargon of things. This great fact we live in and were made by." Our life work is to get ourselves in harmony with the spirit of the universe. By lives of strict justice we create a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, so that it becomes our meat and our drink to do our Master's will. This love of justice once born can never die; it is one of the eternal verities in the life of the mind.

A man may spend his life in seeking after the

pure and the good, and never find them in the world nor realize them in himself. Holiness is a flower of rarer bloom than the century plant. Our best motives are seldom perfectly pure, but are almost always mixed with some dross. But though we struggle after holiness till death, and never reach it in its fullness, the effort has not been in vain. We have caught glimpses of the beauty of holiness and have fallen in love with it. That passion once kindled in the soul neither time nor death can extinguish. The love of holiness is the bed-rock in all right thinking minds, so that to shake it would be to wreck the moral universe. And so of every other moral principle; right living begets in us a love for it which is stronger than death, and which remains untouched by the dissolution of the body and must be as immortal as mind. These several loves make up what we call moral character, and this is what remains unharmed of our life work when everything else is shaken to pieces. Not what we do, but what we become in the doing is stamped with immortality. All that we have wrought out will crumble, perish and vanish, but what has been wrought in us, is an "inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

Just as the loves in us of the true, the just, the right, the pure, and the good make up moral character, so the ensemble of the objects of these loves constitutes our God. All that we know of God is that He is the embodiment of all that is just and true and good, and holy. He is to us the focal point in which all moral principles meet, and the fountain head whence all virtues flow, and the loves which make up moral character are therefore none other than the love of God.

Let death with vandal hand strew all the universe with wreck and ruin, but let God and man and the love of God survive and heaven is eternally secure. No matter where Heaven is, God is everywhere and wherever moral character can feast its love upon truth and justice, goodness and holiness, there is heaven as unshakable as the throne of the Eternal.

Let that which is perishable fall and vanish. That which cannot be shaken will remain. When the cities of earth in the last conflagration are tottering to their fall, above the fire and smoke which envelope them will rise the gilded domes and glittering spires of the "city that hath foundations whose builder and maker is God." Death and darkness are not the end of all human existence. "Dust thou art, to dust thou returnest" was not spoken of the

soul. Above earth's vast necropolis, over the graves of all the ages, spiritual man shall walk through the gates into the city and be forever with the Lord.

No honest labor in this universe is lost. Apparent failure and defeat, no less than success and victory, are chiseling character into the Christ-like. Death only ends the evil but cannot touch the finished work. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. They rest from their labors and their works do follow them." Out of all this withering, dying foliage comes at last a flower of fadeless, deathless bloom. Light after darkness, and life after death, is the song both of nature and revelation. Forward, brother and be not dismayed. "Look not behind you neither stay in all the plain. Escape to the mountain." "Unter die graben, oben die sterne,"—Beneath us are graves, above are the stars.

"Here eyes do regard you
In eternity's stillness;
Here is all fullness
Ye brave, to reward you;
Work and despair not."

The Sin of Aaron.

THE SIN OF AARON.

And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break *it* off. So they gave *it* me : then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.—Exodus XXXII : 24.

These words constitute the excuse which Aaron offered to Moses for the part which he had taken in making the golden calf. Moses had gone up into Mt. Sinai and had tarried there so long that the people became impatient for his return. The mountain was covered with clouds and fierce lightnings wrapped its summit in devouring fires. Whether Moses still lived or whether he had perished on the mountain no one could tell. The suspense at last became intolerable and they broke out in open rebellion against him and repudiated him as their leader. Assembling themselves in the presence of Aaron, who was Moses' representative in his absence, they demanded that he should provide another leader to take the place of Moses, saying, "Up, make us gods which shall go before us ; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him." A crisis has been reached. The people are in the spirit for rebellion. The situation

is threatening. Something must be done, and Aaron, for the purpose of gaining time temporized with their demand. They demanded that he should make them gods, and he, affecting compliance with their demand, requested that they should bring their earrings of gold to him for the purpose. He probably intended this move as a checkmate to them. He did not believe that they would thus sacrifice their ornaments, and if they refused, the difficulty of the situation was relieved. Even if they complied with his request, he thought they would do it tardily and thus time would be consumed. Meanwhile he expected Moses to return and render all further proceeding in the matter useless. To his amazement they promptly brought their jewels and laid them at his feet. Their love of idolatry was greater than their love of gold. The plan which he hoped would relieve him of difficulty is tightening like a vise upon him and rendering him powerless—a not unfrequent result when a man temporizes with evil for policy's sake. He has entered into a tacit agreement to make them a god on condition of their furnishing the gold, and the gold is now presented. The first step in wrong doing forces the second. He casts it into the fire, melts it and moulds it into a golden calf. A graver's tool is next applied to perfect

the moulder's art, and at last there stands a god, the work of men's hands, ready for worship.

And now another step in idolatry must be taken. This god must have an altar. So Aaron proceeds to build an altar. There is nothing left to be done now but to issue a proclamation and call the people together for worship. So Aaron proclaimed the morrow as a feast unto the Lord, well knowing what lord the people would worship, and they rose up early on the morrow and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings and the people sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play." The very end which he was seeking to avert he has been a principal agent in bringing about. His example ought to teach men everywhere the danger of becoming a party to evil in any measure, for any purpose. Once embark with sinners in an unholy enterprise, even though it be in the hope and for the purpose of defeating their object, and you cannot be certain of controlling their course and consequently can never foretell where you will land. Aaron is a pitiable spectacle. He meant well throughout, and yet he who had just been appointed God's high priest to minister at the altars of Jehovah finds himself, he scarcely knows how, at the head of the people offering sacrifice to a golden calf.

Just at this juncture Moses descends the mount, and when he hears the shouting and singing and beholds the dancing of the idolatrous revelers, his righteous indignation waxes hot. First he took the golden calf and ground it to powder and strewed the dust upon the water and made the people drink of it. Having thus destroyed the idol he next turns to Aaron as the representative and responsible head of the Jewish church, and demands an explanation of this sacrilege. Said he, "What did this people unto thee that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" Aaron replies, "Let not the anger of my Lord wax hot. Thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him; and I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me; then I cast it into the fire and there came out this calf."

The passage is a mixture of truth and falsehood. The truth in it is that what he actually did was insignificant as compared with the result which followed, and was only one of many causes which produced it. He simply told the people to bring their gold to him, and, when they brought it, he

cast it into the fire. They demanded that the idol should be made, they brought the gold to him for the purpose, the fire melted it, the mould gave it shape, the artificers engraved it and the people brought sacrifices and worshiped it. He did a little, and men and natural laws and forces did the balance. Moreover, he did not originate the evil, nor did he consummate it. They started the process and they completed it. He simply fell in with the current and was carried along by it. He only assented to the undertaking and contributed his share to it.

And who does anything more than this in any of life's great enterprises? Look at any accomplished result of your life and you will be surprised to find how small a part you played in its production. Take the discovery of America, perhaps the greatest event in its results since the birth of Christ, as an example. The honor is ascribed to Christopher Columbus, and yet how insignificant a part he played when we stop to think about it, among the many causes which revealed the new world to the old. A long line of causes had been at work in different nations thousands of years before he was born rendering his voyage possible and preparing the world for his discovery; and multitudinous forces over which he had no control must follow in

the wake of his discovery to transform a howling wilderness of savages into the great Republic of the west. All previous science and art and civilization had to bring their contributions and lay them at his feet before he could launch forth upon the great enterprise. The mariner's compass had to be discovered before he could make the voyage. Astronomy had to map out the heavens and teach him the motions of the heavenly bodies. Mathematics and navigation must be known in order to find his latitude and longitude. All the experimental knowledge of practical seamanship—the setting of sail, the management of the vessel, the indications of the heavens and the signs of the ocean—must be foreknown before he can weigh anchor and leave port. But before this he must have a vessel, and this presupposes a knowledge of shipbuilding—an art which takes us back through thousands of years to the first hollowed log paddled by man on the water. In building a ship, timber must be cut and sawed and for this purpose iron and steel must be employed. Before the mechanic can practise his art, his tools must be made, and the making of these will take us back through metallurgy to the smelting of the first ore. His vessel must be fitted out with ropes and sails, but before this can be done men must have learned to use the loom, the

spindle, the hetchell and the brake. We are thus conducted back to the growing of flax in the field, and this presupposes a knowledge of agriculture. The crew with which the vessel was manned had a long line of ancestors back of it. All the discipline, obedience and respect for authority which are the result of long established government and which made them patient in trial and subject to command, were the growth of all the ages and had their root in the first petty government set up upon the earth. All science, all art, all civilization came and laid their treasures at his feet and he simply melted them together and molded them into form. Not only men but natural laws and forms co-operated to make the discovery. The light streamed from heaven, magnetism pointed the needle, the winds filled the sails and the waters buoyed him up. Even after the discovery of America, what countless processes and forces were necessary to transform it into what it now is. Spain, France, Holland and England must successively people and govern it. Fierce and bloody Indian wars must be carried on. The forests must be felled, the marshes drained, the rivers bridged and the lands cultivated. Turnpikes, canals, railroads and telegraphs must follow. Great cities must be built with their multiplied commercial, political, educational, social and

charitable institutions. The continent when it first broke upon the eye of Columbus was but a crude, rough thing that needed the graver's tool upon it before it could command the homage of the nations. A thousand agents and processes preceded the discovery and made it possible, and as many more succeeded to make the discovery of any value or importance to mankind.

As we contemplate Columbus standing in the center of these surging and impatient forces, he dwindles to a mere dwarf; the part which he played in history was trifling and insignificant compared with the splendid results which followed. He said if the nations would bring him sufficient gold he would find a northwest passage to India. They brought it and he could not help making the crucial test. When the continent once hove in sight, all the rest followed without his co-operation or consent. He could not see the end. He simply linked the past to the future on the shore of a new continent and all the rest followed as an irresistible consequence.

What is true in this respect in the great world around us, is also true in the world within us. Character building, whether good or bad, is the result not alone of our isolated effort but as well of innumerable agents and influences other than our

own. We talk of self-made and self-ruined men, and yet how small a part of the accomplished fact is the direct result of the man's own immediate act. Prenatal conditions had something to do in laying the foundation of his character. The influences of father and mother, sister and brother, home and surroundings were moulding him while yet in his cradle. During the plastic years of his youth, companions and associates, education and employments, success and failure were all stamping their impress upon him. In after life sickness and health, poverty and plenty, temptation and opportunity had much to do in shaping his course. Like the Israelites journeying from Egypt to the Promised Land, we cannot take the course we would, but must bend our steps whither we can go, backward and forward, now this way, now that, our journey through life is a long and crooked one, made such not by our choice but by our environments. The man's own voluntary act was only one of many causes which shaped his life and moulded his character. Look at that miserable drunkard, with character wrecked and manhood paralyzed—a son of God in ruins—and then ask who made him what he is. He did not create the drinking habits of the country. He did not make the liquor which he drank nor yet discover distillation. He did not

make the appetite which burns like fire within him. He never meant to throw himself away and reach the level where he now stands. He did not even seek the intoxicating bowl. He found all the conditions of his ruin made ready to his hand. There were appetite within and temptation without urging him to yield. Others brought the cup to him and he simply cast it into the fire, or rather cast the fire into himself and there came out this calf. He never counted upon or consented to, this result when he yielded to temptation and took the first glass. Having taken the first step in ruin, inflamed appetite, the force of habit, social influences and public opinion all put the graver's tool upon him and carved him into what we now find him.

John Bardsley did not make himself city treasurer, nor organize the Keystone Bank. He did not extort the money from the people, nor was he responsible for the failure of the bank. The bank offered him interest on the people's money and he simply deposited it for his own benefit. The investigation, the trial, the conviction and the imprisonment which followed were all carried on without his co-operation or consent. It is only another illustration of the principle under consideration: The people brought their gold to him and he cast it into the fire and there came out this calf,

The falsehood of the passage lies in its assuming that a man is excusable for wrong doing because he was the victim of circumstances and that at most he is responsible for results only in proportion to the part which he played in bringing them about. Substantially it is the same excuse as that offered by the first sinners of our race. They said, "The woman that thou gavest me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat, and The serpent beguiled me and I did eat." Aaron's statement is false because it does not give the whole truth. He omits to mention that he commanded the people to bring their gold to him for the purpose of casting a god. He suppresses the fact that the mould was made to his order and that the engravers were instructed how to adorn the image. The gold did not accidentally come out of the fire in the shape of a calf. The Israelites had just left Egypt where they had witnessed the worship of the bull Apis, and Aaron therefore well knew what form the god should take in order to be acceptable to the people. His hands, it is true, did not mould nor engrave it, but his head did both. Moreover he caused an altar to be erected and proclaimed a feast for the purpose of worshipping this idol. One would suppose from reading his excuse, that he had been the

innocent victim of circumstances. His language implies that he had simply cast the gold into the fire without knowing that it would, and without intending that it should, come out a god. He only pulled the trigger not knowing the gun was loaded.

It is astonishing how history repeats itself. In nine cases out of ten of wrong doing men offer the same excuse. The affected innocence of criminals everywhere is simply refreshing. What they did was a very little thing, they were almost forced to do it by circumstances and did not know the consequences which would result. The truth is they did more than they admit and were not as ignorant and consequently not as innocent as they pretend. The president of a bank passes his own note and has it discounted in his own bank and thus becomes borrower and lender at one and the same time. The result is that the money thus borrowed is sunk in speculation, the bank breaks and hundreds of depositors lose their hard-earned savings. When arrested and brought face to face with the ruin which he has wrought, very commonly he affects innocence and poses as a victim of circumstances. All he did was to pass his own note, others were guilty of inducing him to invest in the speculation and he did not know that what he did would result in widespread loss and ruin to oth-

ers. He affects to be genuinely sorry for the one misstep which he made, but claims to have been innocent in intention and does not want to be held responsible for all the evil which has followed. To me there is something perfectly nauseating in hearing a man of commanding ability and influence thus plead the baby act to excuse his guilt. As in Aaron's case, so in every case since then, the offender did more and knew more than he admits. The bank president did more than pass his own note. He drew it up and signed it. He presented it and drew the money for it. He concealed the transaction from the board of directors and acted a falsehood to deceive everybody until the exposure came. He was not so ignorant of consequences as he affects, moreover. Of course he did not certainly foreknow how his speculation would turn out, or he would not have embarked in it. But he did know that there was great risk and that if he lost, all the rest would follow. He did know that he was jeopardizing other people's money and that when he cast it into the fire there might come out nothing more than a calf. A man's acts may be either direct or indirect, mediate or immediate, and his knowledge may be either certain or probable, positive or inferential. A man can act without using his hands and see without using his eyes.

What he does by an agent, he does himself, and what he sees mentally and inferentially is just as much knowledge as if he had sensible evidences of it. Moreover a man is responsible for what he did not do and did not know if such inaction and ignorance are the result of his indifference to or acquiescence in the consequences which follow. The man who does nothing but quietly stands by and witnesses a murder becomes *particeps criminis* because he did not interfere, and the man who turns the draw of a railroad bridge off and does not know that a train is approaching when he might know the fact by looking is as guilty as if he saw the great headlight of the engine blazing around the curve. A man is responsible for not knowing when he might have known and guilty for acting without knowledge.

But Aaron claimed to be the victim of circumstances. Well, what criminal is not in some measure the victim of circumstances? Few men commit sin or crime simply from the love of evil. There is always the hope of gain or the fear of loss impelling them to action. Then there is example and influence, temptation and opportunity all singing a siren song to lure him on. A man who consents to be governed by circumstances will be their victim all the time. God made man to be the lord

of creation—not its slave. His commission was to subdue and keep the earth, not to be subdued by it. His business is to seize upon opportunities and victimize circumstances—not to be victimized by them. There is no virtue in doing the right when there is no temptation to do wrong. The glory of our manhood is that it can rise superior to circumstances and defy them all. He only measures up to duty who, taking his stand in the center of adverse circumstances, conquers and controls them in the interest of right. Aaron yielded to evil because, he said, “the people were set on mischief.” Luther at the Diet of Worms with all Christendom in arms against him and with a martyr’s death threatening him, boldly looked his enemies in the eye and refused to recant, exclaiming, “Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise, God help me.” A man with God’s help is more than a match for any circumstances and he who surrenders to them must bear the consequences of his cowardice and defeat.

But finally the great fallacy of Aaron’s excuse lies in the assumption that his responsibility is to be measured by the size of the act which he had committed. His casuistry is all quantitative and ignores the qualitative altogether, as if an equal amount of responsibility attached to the same act

whenever, wherever and by whomsoever committed. But who does not know that this is false in toto! A few years ago the entrance to New York harbor from Long Island Sound was obstructed by submarine rocks. The danger of a passage at this place was so great that it was named Hell Gate. To remove these rocks men were at work for years under water drilling and boring. At last the rocks were honeycombed with chambers and a dynamite cartridge was placed in each chamber. These were all connected with wires, and the wires conducted to an office in New York city. Here an electric battery was charged and was ready to send its current along the wires the moment it should be connected. There was a little electric button there which a man might have played upon as upon the keys of a piano, for hours at any time before, without any responsibility. But now all things are made ready and a man simply touched that button with his finger and quick as thought an explosion followed which shook all New York and opened a channel through Hell Gate twenty-four feet deep. The touching of the button was a little act, but that little act was of vast consequence. It was the same act which had been performed a thousand times before, but the responsibility attaching to it now was a thousand times

greater than ever before. Responsibility is to be measured not by the size of the act, but by the legitimate results of that act.

Take another illustration. There stands a railroad train filled with passengers and with steam up, but the engineer and fireman have not yet boarded the engine. Suppose an ignorant man shall now board the engine and pull out the throttle valve. Away goes the train with breakneck speed and he cannot stop it, until at last it jumps the track and is piled in heaps of ruin with scores of dead and mutilated passengers beneath it. Do you tell me that the man's responsibility is to be measured by the size of his act? Why, he did nothing but pull out the throttle valve—a trifling thing considered in itself. Who does not know that the ghost of every injured passenger will shake its gory locks at him and that, not his act but the consequences of that act, will confront him in judgment? Nor will his ignorance or the force of circumstances serve to mitigate his crime. He had no business to meddle with that engine if he did not know the effect of pulling out the throttle valve. Men may have urged him or even bribed him to do it, but while this fact inculcates them it does not exculpate him. He has no right to become the tool of other people or to be bought and sold by them.

Despite all the excuses which he can offer, both God and men will hold him accountable not for the pulling out of the throttle valve only but for the wreck of the train.

Brothers, in the light of our responsibility, how solemn does all life become! This universe in which we live is one vast engine with batteries of power pulsating and throbbing and hissing all around us. There are whole trains of consequences involving the lives and characters of many human beings coupled to these forces. A single act or word of ours may set a train moving, which we cannot stop, until it ends in ruin and disaster. The act may be a small one, but if it set in motion mighty forces, the responsibility will not be small. Where immortal interests are at stake and where fatal forces are caged all around us, it does not do to trifle with valves and springs and levers which may unchain these forces in an instant. We have no right to carelessly handle machinery of whose uses and pent up forces we are ignorant and we have no right to be ignorant of the world in which we live and move. What others may have done toward contributing to the evil will not relieve us of responsibility. Men and devils may tempt but cannot force us to do wrong. If therefore we yield to temptation and fail to weigh well the consequences

of what we are doing, we must expect to have the whole evil charged home upon us and to be called to account for it. If we cast the gold into the fire, the calf which comes out will take shelter in our door.

Lot's Choice.

LOT'S CHOICE.

Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.—Genesis XIII : 12.

Separated from their context these words would mean but little. They simply express a fact which transpired many thousands of miles from here and several thousands of years ago. But taken in connection with preceding and subsequent history this passage is big with moral import and will give birth to several valuable lessons for our instruction.

Lot was nephew to Abraham. When the Lord said to Abram "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee," as Abram departed from Haran to obey the command, the record says "Lot went with him." When, in consequence of a famine in the land of Canaan Abraham went down to Egypt, again Lot went with him. When the famine was over and Abraham went back into Canaan we read again, "Lot went with him." Not only did he accompany the patriarch in person, but his fortunes thus far seem to have kept pace with Abraham's successes. When we read "Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold" we

have only to run our eyes a few verses further on and we come to the passage, "And Lot also which went with Abram had flocks and herds and tents." Thus far they had dwelt together and worked together and prospered together. Up to this time in all probability Lot had been under the care of his uncle and had been guided by his counsels and example. But a time came at last when separation became necessary and Lot was compelled to exercise his own judgment and choose for himself.

Arrived at Bethel upon their return from Egypt it soon became apparent that the country there was too limited to accommodate both of them with their immense flocks and herds. Disputes arose between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle, which resulted in open strife. There was danger that the masters, espousing the cause of their servants, might become embittered towards each other and their friendship be turned into hate. Abram, with the prudence for which he is noted, proposed that, in order to avoid difficulty, they should divide the land between them and separate, saying to Lot: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt

take the left hand then I will go to the right ; or if thou depart to the right hand then I will go to the left."

It would have been but modest to say the least for Lot, who was the younger and who owed all that he had to his uncle's kindness and care, to have given the patriarch the first choice and to have been satisfied to take as his portion the land that was left. But with inexcusable selfishness he set about to get the better of his uncle in the division. The record says "Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan that it was well watered everywhere . . . even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan and Lot journeyed East." Then follows the text. Having chosen his portion and separated from Abraham he went and "dwelled in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent toward Sodom."

The passage thus connected gives us Lot's Choice as a theme for consideration. We are not prepared to judge of the wisdom or folly of his choice until we know the considerations which led to it and what was involved in it. The history more than intimates that the only consideration which decided him to go to the East was temporal advantage. The valley of the Jordan was well

watered and was therefore rich in pasture lands. Here his flocks and herds might roam in green pastures and he revel in abundance. Perhaps he called to mind the famine which had driven him and his uncle into Egypt and calculated that in time of drought these well watered bottom lands of the Jordan would be the last to fail in yielding a harvest. There was no little shrewdness displayed in his selection and doubtless he prided himself upon his prudence and forethought. Abram had given him the first choice, and taking advantage of the patriarch's generosity he had taken the lion's share. There the plain lay before him, green and flowery and well watered even as the garden of the Lord. The choice had been given him and why should he not choose that which promised greatest advantage?

There were other considerations which ought to have made him hesitate long in this selection, but he seems to have speedily disposed of them. A man would naturally ask what about the healthfulness and inhabitants of the country to which he was going? A western prairie may be rich as the garden of the Lord, but if it breed fever and ague and its only inhabitants are wild Indians, a man would be slow to select it as his home. A tract of land may be well watered and fertile, but it may lie

at the foot of a slumbering valcano or it may be in a district that is rocked occasionally by earthquakes. It may be a beautiful valley, but it may be a highway over which armies pass in times of war, or the battlefield of surrounding tribes, or it may lie open exposed to the incursions of freebooters and banditti. A man can easily overreach himself in trying to get the better of another. Avarice not infrequently blinds a man to his true interests. When we are so intent upon any one thing we lose sight of a great many other important things.

Lot seems to have set his heart upon wealth and in his eagerness to secure it he lost sight of a number of things quite as important to his happiness. The truth was, as the sequel proved, that the plain of the Jordan was naturally defenceless against the incursions of an enemy. A time soon came when Chedorlaomer, with three confederate kings, descended into the vale of Siddim and gave battle to the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah with their allies, and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled and fell there, while their broken and scattered forces took refuge in the mountains. And in the spoliation of the country which followed the defeat we are told that the victors "took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods and departed."

The valley of Jordan was a beautiful plain, but Lot, with all his goods, was carried captive away from it. Abraham, hearing the news of his nephew's capture, threw himself at the head of his servants, pursued and overtook the bandit king, and in the battle which followed defeated him and retook Lot with all his goods, and restored him to his possessions. Peace having thus been restored Lot once more dwelt in security upon his wide spreading lands.

There was another consideration which ought to have weighed upon Lot's mind more heavily than even the danger of robbery and war in deciding the selection of his dwelling place, and that was the moral character of the people with whom he was to associate. The value of a property depends very largely upon the neighborhood in which it is located. One of the most substantial testimonies which the world bears to the value of Christianity is in the estimate which it places upon Christian society and Christian institutions. Look over the morning papers and read the advertisements of properties for sale and you will find that after describing the premises, it is carefully added that the property is within a short distance of churches and schools and in the midst of a Christian neighborhood. The man who has any regard

for his own morals or any concern about the character of his children will take into account the people among whom he is to dwell more than the land which he is to cultivate. This consideration was present to the mind of Lot when he made his choice and had to be taken into account. There lay the valley of the Jordan, well watered and beautiful, but over there was Sodom and the cities of the plain. The two were inseparable. If he chose the plain he had to associate with the people. Common decency forbids me to attempt a description of the character of the Sodomites. Their unmentionable vices and crimes had turned their city into a festering plague spot on the face of the earth. It is doubtful whether the people of any city either ancient or modern ever descended to greater depths of vileness than the inhabitants of this city on the banks of the Jordan. It was not simply the rabble of lewd fellows that had brought disgrace upon the city by their vices; the whole population seem to have been infected by the moral contagion. The angel of God promised Abraham that the city should not be destroyed if ten righteous persons could be found in it, but the ten could not be found. Society was rotten to the core, and there was no sound spot in it. It often happens that disease fastens upon the fairest form, and so this most cor-

rupt of all cities lay festering and reeking in the midst of the fertile and well-watered plains of the Jordan.

Lot could not but have taken in the whole situation when he made his choice. The character of the city was notorious, and the facts were patent to all. If he went to the east he secured magnificent pasture lands—wealth and ease and luxury were there, but moral death was there also.

He could amass a fortune there and leave a rich legacy of houses and lands and herds to his children, but in doing it he would have to subject them to the fearful ordeal of growing up and forming their character amid vice and licentiousness unparalleled. The text plainly shows that he saw the danger but made his choice on the side of temporal gain, in the face of it. Perhaps he would not like to have stated it thus, but the meaning of his choice under the circumstances is that he thought more of his flocks and herds than he did of his children. The statement in the text that "he pitched his tent toward Sodom" is very suggestive. Why did he not go to Sodom and dwell there as he afterward did? I think the answer is apparent to every one. Knowing the character of the people and the danger to the morals of his family, he did not at first even mean to go there. He

started in that direction, but he did not mean to go all the way to Sodom. He had to go toward it if he took the well watered valley lands, but he intended to stop half-way and dwell in some of the cities of the plain whose morals were bad enough, it is true, but still nothing like as bad as those of Sodom. He saw the danger, but thought he could avoid it. He fancied he could walk amid the fire and not be burned. For the sake of worldly advantage he deliberately decided to take the risk of corrupting the morals and damning the souls of himself and his family, vainly imagining that notwithstanding everybody else had yielded to its influence, he could dwell amid corruption and not be infected by it. He might about as well have entered the maelstrom and circled around it a few times without intending to go down in its awful vortex as to have pitched his tent toward Sodom without expecting to dwell there at last. The secret of it all was, he looked more at gain than at godliness in his choice and the god of this world blinded his eyes so that in his selection he failed to secure the worldly advantage which he sought and well nigh destroyed himself and his whole family, both body and soul. His subsequent history reveals in glaring colors the rashness and folly of his choice. He sought worldly advantage and before

he knew it he and all his goods were captured in war and only the strong arm of Abram, whom he had sought to overreach, restored him to his home and possessions. He meant to stop short of Sodom and preserve both his morals and religion, but it was not long before he was dwelling within the walls of Sodom, and when the lewd rabble surrounded his house and demanded possession of his angel guests, he offered to hand over his two daughters instead, and afterward himself prostituted them both in a drunken debauch. Nor were their morals any better than his, for in their final shame they were more to blame than he. He chose the well-watered plain because of its material wealth despite the moral corruption of its society, and at last, when heaven's fire and brimstone descended to disinfect this plague spot, his property, his wife and most of his children perished in the common ruin, while he and his two daughters alone escaped to perpetuate the licentiousness of the place.

Lot ignored the value of morals and religion in the choice which he made, and God set his blood-red seal of wrath upon his worldly mindedness. Sacred history is heaven's monition speaking from the graves of the past to the living of to-day. The time and the place may be far away, but men are

essentially the same everywhere and always, and God and his laws are the same yesterday, to-day and forever.

A time comes in every man's life when he must make choice for himself. A father's, a mother's, or a guardian's care cannot go with us all through life. Sooner or later we must bid adieu to their guidance, exercise our own judgment and strike out a course for ourselves. That hour, whenever it comes, is one burdened with eternal issues. We little dream then as we stand balanced and hesitating between the various courses before us, now inclining to this side and then to that, what an eternity of joy or sorrow depends upon the choice. On the crest of the water shed which separates the great northern basin of our country from the southern, there is a line where every rain drop as it falls upon the ground, will pause, quiver and rock back and forth apparently unable to decide whether it shall flow down the declivity on the north, or whether it shall join the waters which roll southward. A single hair or the gentlest puff of wind is sufficient to turn the scales and decide its destiny. Where the attractions are so nearly balanced one would think it a matter of indifference which side won. But the decision upon that doubtful line away up in the mountains will deter-

mine whether the rain drop shall at last mingle with the blue waters of the lakes or whether it shall roll down and be lost in the Gulf. Every young man and young woman, too, who is halting between two opinions in regard to the future course of his or her life, is standing upon that line now, and upon the choice which they make will depend whether they shall hereafter walk in robes of white or be covered with the blackness of darkness forever.

As in the case of Lot, so now "the land is before us," and we can go either to the right hand or to the left, and as with him, so still with us, the choice will be between gain and godliness, property and purity, pleasure and piety. On the one side are devout worship, rugged virtue and security; on the other is a well-watered plain, green and flowery, which promises pleasure and plenty, but there is a Sodom in the midst of it. The choice in the last analysis is reduced to this: Shall I aim at worldly success first and make morals and religion secondary, or shall I hold religion and moral character as paramount and make worldly prosperity subordinate and subservient? Shall I seek my pleasure and secure my fortune first and then turn my attention to religion, or shall I bow first at the foot of the cross and seek my enjoyment

and fortune in the service of God? The question thus fairly and squarely put has been authoritatively answered by the Lord Jesus Christ himself: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Don't make the mistake of supposing that you can shut God out of your calculations and succeed. A worldly life promises much, I know, but it never pays half it promises. A man may get the well-watered plain in defiance of religion; he may trample God's law under his feet and succeed in amassing a fortune or climbing to a lofty seat of power, but sooner or later the spoiler will come and filch it away, or heaven's fire will descend and consume it. "Boss" Tweed set both the laws of God and man at defiance and made power and wealth the goal of life's race, and he succeeded beyond his most sanguine expectations. But a time came at last when truth and justice vindicated themselves and when he, stripped of his property, friendless and powerless, died in a convict's cell. God's law is no less certain to visit punishment upon the sinner than are the statutes of men to punish the criminal. Let a man engage in the liquor traffic and deal out liquid death by the gill to his neighbor—he has a license and is not, therefore, liable to any legal penalties—he may amass a fortune, live in

ease and plenty, but if his children turn out gutter drunkards, as they probably will, his success is a bitter failure. The destruction of Lot's house by fire and brimstone was a lighter curse than the fiend of delirium tremens which is destroying so many homes to-day.

But the text suggests a greater danger in the choice which we make than any I have thus far indicated. Lot never meant to go to Sodom, he only pitched his tent toward it. He deluded himself with the idea that for the sake of temporal advantage he might tread on questionable ground without serious loss. He meant to preserve his purity and that of his family while yet he associated with the vile. He intended to stop half-way and dwell in one of the cities of the plain, and little dreamed that if Sodom were destroyed he would be involved in its ruin. In a word he meant to trade and mingle with the Sodomites but never to become like them. How, then, did he get into Sodom, and how did he and his family become so corrupt? We do not know, and it is doubtful whether he ever knew how. Having pitched his tent toward the place he found it easier to go on than to stop; and when the final overthrow came he dwelt within its walls. This fatal delusion is the soft and glossy spider's web which is luring so

many to ruin and death. The destroyer keeps himself hidden until you are once in his meshes, then he makes his appearance, only to grin at your struggles to escape, while he every moment binds you tighter and tighter in his toils. There is not one man in ten thousand who ever intends to become a drunkard. They begin with the social glass and intend to stop half-way with the moderate drinking. Point then, to the bloated drunkard wallowing in the street or reeling to his miserable home to curse and beat his broken-hearted wife and innocent children, and they would exclaim in horror: "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" They forget that their tent is pitched toward just that thing, and that the vilest sot started where they started, and traveled over the same road which they now tread. Will they stop half-way? In three cases out of four they will go straight down to Sodom, if they do not die on the road, and when arrived they will wonder how they got there.

The cashier of a bank or the custodian of a trust fund would scoff at the suggestion that he could ever steal or rob. He begins with using moneys which are lying idle in his hands, pledging himself to make good all he thus borrows. But soon he embarks in larger speculations where, in case of

failure he could not make good the funds thus risked. Still he does not mean to go far in that direction—he will make just one more venture and then stop. Will he do it? Why then are there so many men who once held these trusts in our penitentiaries to-day, and so many more who ought to be there, for embezzlement?

I suppose that the men who go to Congress and the Legislatures are made out of the same stuff as those who stay at home. I am charitable enough to believe that few of them ever mean at the start to accept a bribe or to barter away the interests of the people to secure their own personal ends. But the moment the politician winks at the fraud which secures his nomination that moment he pitches his tent toward Sodom, and step by step he will travel downward in the majority of cases until at last his vote is in the open market for sale to the highest bidder, and his only politics is plunder.

Let a man start in business and begin by practicing the tricks of trade—misrepresenting his goods and taking advantage of the ignorance or confidence of a customer. He only means to be a sharp business man, but in nine cases out of ten he will end a liar and a rogue, if indeed, he be not both at the start. It is easy to run on a down grade and very hard to stop. Safety lies in never start-

ing on that track. Don't pitch your tent toward Sodom, neither dwell in all the plain. Corruption and death are there and hereafter fire and brimstone will be there. The greatest danger of our age lies in the disposition to tamper with evil for the sake of pecuniary advantage under the fatal delusion that we can mingle with wicked people and indulge in a little wickedness ourselves without being corrupted by the one or made captive by the other. Be assured that glossy tempter has a serpent's fang.

“Vice is a monster of such frightful mien
That to be hated needs but to be seen,
But seen too oft' familiar with her face
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

Since a choice in life must be made, and since our eternal destiny depends upon that choice, let us beware that we are not deceived and led astray. No matter how promising the portion, if you must take it at the sacrifice of moral or religious principles you buy it too dear. If a man has to countenance corruption and associate on friendly terms with the vicious in order to succeed, he had better never succeed in life. Such a course is the sacrificing all that is worth living for in order to have a pompous funeral. Don't dream for a moment that you can start in the path of evil and stop

when you please, or rather, don't imagine that having once started, it will ever be your pleasure to stop. If you once pitch your tent toward Sodom and consent to dwell in one of the cities of the plain ten chances to one you will never stop until you reach the city of destruction. Would you be secure, turn your face in the other direction. "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed."

The Restoring of the Withered
Hand.

THE RESTORING OF THE WITHERED HAND.

A great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.—Mark III : 8.

Here was a startling miracle wrought by the utterance of a single sentence from the lips of Christ. A man with a withered hand heard Jesus say "stretch forth thy hand" and the next instant found himself perfectly cured. It required no effort on the part of Christ. He simply "spake and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast." It required no loss of time to work the cure. The man with the withered hand never knew when he was healed. He only knew that when he came to Christ his arm was powerless and that when in obedience to Christ's command he tried to stretch it forth it was well. Silently, secretly, instantaneously the work was done, no man knew when or how. Miracles were easy to Christ. He appeared more at home in the realm of the miraculous than in the natural world. In the natural, ends are reached only through means. Space must be bridged by connecting media and processes requiring time must be employed. Above the nat-

ural, Jesus could annihilate both time and space, and, dispensing with all processes and means, could bring His own almighty power to bear directly where He would.

Now, since it was so easy for Him to perform miracles the fact that He wrought comparatively few miraculous cures is proof conclusive that the healing of the sick was not the chief reason for displaying His almighty power. He could have brought the dead back to life, but He raised only a very few and these were resurrected only temporarily, for they all afterward died again and descended to the grave—the common receptacle of the race. He could have healed every leper and cured every sick person on the globe not only then but throughout all time. But He healed at most only a few thousand and their cures were only temporary—they were all subject to the same diseases afterward as they had been before and in a few years they all sickened and died as though no divine interposition had ever taken place in their cases. The great end of His mission was evidently not to save the bodies of men from disease and death. Sin has so warped, disturbed and dwarfed these clay tenements that they are unfit to be the home of the soul or to become the temple of the Holy Ghost. Christ never meant by

arresting disease and paralyzing death to make us immortal on the earth and thus consign us to an everlasting abode in these tabernacles of flesh all wrecked and shattered as they are by the fall. His plan is not to patch up the old wreck, but to let sickness and death pull it entirely down and take it all apart and afterward from its scattered dust to rebuild it in all its original grandeur, a fit home for the soul and a temple of the Holy Ghost. The resurrection of the body to a life where "sickness, sorrow, pain and death are felt and feared no more" is the final, crowning work of Christ's great mission, but it is yet in the future and when it takes place we will bid adieu to this sin-cursed earth and our feet will tread upon the blossoms of a greener, brighter shore. Not here and now does Christ propose to restore our withered hands, but in the last great day when the battle is over and the victory won—when the palms are to be distributed to the conquerors, then He will give us hands that are able to wave them. God means to make death complete the work which it has begun. Like a corrosive in human nature He means to make it rust itself out and then in the fires of a world in flames He will smelt the material anew and run it in a perfect mould "without spot or

wrinkle or any such thing." "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

Christ's great work upon our earth was to destroy the power of the devil over human souls and restamp them with the image of God. Not only has the dwelling place been shattered by sin but its immortal occupant is palsied and helpless within. The body can wait until the resurrection morning to be rebuilt, but the soul must have help at once or it will perish. Jesus came to a world of dying souls and cried, "I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly." Here he cut short the work of sin and death by a new creation and started the soul upon a new career by imparting to it a new life. "As many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them which believe on His name; which were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

In our shortsightedness means are often mistaken for ends, and appearances are supposed to be realities. We look on and see Jesus feed the hungry, heal the sick and raise the dead and without inquiring further we call Him the great physician and imagine that the end of His incarnate existence was to satisfy our physical wants and cure our bodily diseases. As well might we suppose

the telegraph operator as he sits tapping the button before him to be simply thrumming a tune for his amusement. He is sending a message to a distant man and what we see and hear him doing are only appearances and fall infinitely short of the reality. Could we but look for a moment to the other end of the line and read the message there we would see that the end was infinitely above the means employed and would lose sight altogether of the operator fingering the key of his instrument. The revelator had seen Jesus at work upon human nature here touching the eyes of the blind, unstopping the ears of the deaf and taking the hand of the dead and then in apocalyptic vision he was taken to the other end of life's line and was given to see that physical cures were only the means of purifying immortal souls and making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Jesus was touching the keys of sense only to send his message to the man within. The great multitude which no man could number, clad in white and with palms in their hands were singing and shouting, John tells us, the praises of the Lamb. But in all their matchless doxologies they do not so much as mention the feeding of the hungry or the healing of the sick or the raising of the dead. They utterly lose sight of what Jesus did for their

bodies in rapturous thanksgiving for the salvation of their souls. As they gaze upon the Lamb they forget the Physician and think only of the Savior and in one bursting chorus shout "Unto Him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion both now and forever, Amen."

Well, if the great end of Christ's mission was to save souls, and if in God's great plan of redemption the cure of diseases is of comparative insignificance, then why did Jesus cure any diseases? Why should He step aside from the great work of saving souls to open a blind man's eyes or cure a leper or raise a dead man? Especially pertinent does this question become when we remember that his cures were not permanent, but only temporary. Since men were not taken by Him from under the dominion of disease and death, why did He suspend for a brief season the action of nature's laws in a few exceptional cases? The whole difficulty in our minds resolves itself into this one question: If His work was peculiarly one in the realm of spirit, then why did He so often give us exhibitions of His miraculous power in the material world?

There must be some connection and relation between the physical and the spiritual to explain Christ's alternating between them in His work. Such a connection and relation are nowhere stated in the Scriptures, but they are everywhere implied and assumed. When Jesus asked "whether is easier to say thy sins be forgiven thee or to say arise, take up thy bed and walk," He plainly implied that the pardon of sins and the healing of disease sustained some relation to each other, otherwise no comparison could be instituted between them. Again when in the sermon on the mount the Master called attention to the manner in which God provided for the birds of the air prefacing His remarks by the question, "is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment?" and concluding by asking "are ye not much better than they?" it is assumed that the animal life of the bird and the spiritual life of man stand so related to each other that we can reason from what God does in the one case to what He will do in the other. This assumption of a truth is the strongest possible mode of declaring it. It implies that the truth is so patent that it needs no statement and that it is so evident that none will dispute it. People then believed and they now believe, that if God takes care of flowers and birds He will also take care of men—

that He who will cure the bodies of men will also save their souls—in a word that the God of nature is also the God of grace. But few perhaps have ever asked by what logic this universal conclusion was reached. Beneath the reasoning which forces this belief lies the assumption that the world of matter and of spirit are so related that from the same cause we may expect similar results in both realms.

When, however, we begin to think upon the subject, the chasm between matter and spirit becomes so broad and deep that we can scarcely conceive of a bridge across it upon which to pass from the one realm to the other. Matter is inert, unconscious, without responsibility. Spirit, on the contrary, is essentially active, conscious, self-determining. Its one great law is the law of right and its every act is either in obedience to or in violation of that law. It is a responsible intelligence while matter is a dead existence. There is not a single property in common between them. Matter has bulk, shape, weight, hardness, color, taste, smell, sound; but who could conceive of any such properties belonging to spirit? The very suggestion that the properties of the one could be transferred to the other shocks the mind as something monstrous and preposterous. It is just here

that the materialistic science of to-day breaks down and confesses its inability to bridge the chasm between matter and spirit. The scientists can prove that thought is accompanied by chemical changes in the brain and that it generates mechanical force in the muscles and they have undertaken to translate chemical change into thought and thought into mechanical force or motion, but Mr. Tyndall, than whom there is no greater living authority, frankly confesses that the passage from chemical changes in the brain to consciousness is unthinkable.

Well, if the two realms are so diametrically different that we cannot even think a connection between them, then what is the relation by which men universally believe that what we see in the physical world will find its counterpart in the world of spirit? Let me illustrate the difficulty. The world is made up of solid earth, of water, of the surrounding atmosphere, and beyond this of ether extending indefinitely into space. Now if I can see an animal walking the earth I cannot infer from hence that if transferred to the water it will walk upon its surface; or if I see a fish swimming in the water I cannot conclude that if thrown into the air it would swim there, too; or if I see a bird cleaving the air with its wings I am not justified in

concluding that when it has soared to the limit of our atmosphere it can fly through the fields of ether out into space. Each realm has its own laws and the same agent when transferred from the one to the other will act very differently. How then do we certainly conclude when we see Jesus restore a withered hand that He will perform the counterpart of that cure for the soul, since soul and body are in realms so widely separated in nature?

That which connects the two worlds and enables us to pass in thought from the one to the other is the continuity of moral principles. Just as in the material universe we are certain that the law of gravitation will attract all matter whether solid, liquid or gaseous, not only upon the earth's surface but to the remotest star that wanders in the fields of space, so moral principles are the same in heaven and in earth, in the physical world and in the spiritual, whether applied to an insect or an angel. Earth, water and air are all different, they have different inhabitants and must be traversed by different means, but a duck will walk on the land, swim on the water, and fly through the air. It will adapt itself to the element to be traversed and will obey the laws of the realm in which it acts, but it will go through them all. If you lose sight

of its surroundings and think only of the fowl you will clearly see that the propelling force is the desire for locomotion and you will not doubt that that desire will seek its gratification by pushing its way through all elements alike. So matter and spirit are as wide apart in nature as the poles, they each have laws of their own, they are separated by an impassable gulf so that the one cannot cross over to the other, but a moral principle finds no difficulty in passing from the one to the other, undergoes no change by the transfer and is equally at home in both. It will adapt itself to the nature and laws of the realm in which it acts, but it will act and accomplish its end. Divine goodness will not only clothe the grass of the field; it will clothe you, oh ye of little faith! Nay, more, it will clothe immortal souls in robes of spotless white. It will not only feed the ravens when they cry, it will also feed you with the bread which perishes and hereafter will spread a feast of marrow and fat things for redeemed spirits in Heaven. Divine mercy will not only cleanse a leprous body, it will as certainly sprinkle clean water upon a polluted spirit and wash it whiter than snow. The same principle which will raise a dead body to life will resurrect a dead soul and breathe into it anew the breath of lives. Banish from your thought Christ's sur-

roundings and the objects of his benefactions and rivet your attention only upon Him and you will feel certain that what He does in one realm He will repeat in all realms. Let us see Him heal a withered hand and we will know that He will strengthen a weak soul. There is no analogy between a body and a spirit, their diseases have nothing in common, they must be reached in very different ways and healed by very different means, but when I see Jesus touched with sympathy for suffering humanity and seeking to relieve bodily misery, I know that the same nature will respond to suffering of any kind anywhere and that in the realm of spirit He will adapt Himself to the wants of the soul so as to heal all its diseases. This is nature's logic and it is universal.

It will not be difficult now to understand why Christ who came so specially to save men's souls should engage occasionally in healing their bodies. The Old Testament had prepared the way for the great salvation. The prophets had taught the analogy between bodily diseases and a sinful soul. Isaiah was describing the moral state of the people when he exclaimed "The whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores."

The people admitted the similarity of the condition of a diseased body and a depraved soul. Jesus had therefore only to prove himself a physician in order to be believed in as a Savior. Men reason from the seen to the unseen, from the known to the unknown, from the physical to the spiritual. Give us a surface outcropping and we will believe in mines of untold wealth underground. Jesus must exhibit His disposition and ability to relieve human misery in the world of sense as the means of unlocking the door to the souls of men. Before men will open their inmost being to Him they must be assured of His mercy and His power. Power alone never won any heart. We may tremble or kneel before it. We may wonder at and admire it. But we cannot trust or love it. It may have ability to protect and bless, but we cannot forget that it is able also to crush and curse. Had Jesus simply exhibited almighty power men might have cowered before Him to save their lives but they would not have repented of their sins and loved Him to the saving of their souls. Moral natures must be reached by moral agencies. A tear will do more to convert a sinner from the error of his way than the lash, the axe or the flames. Put your own big, warm heart so close to the sinner's that he can feel its pulsations of love and sympathy

and that will do more than dynamite to destroy the defences in which he has intrenched himself. But sympathy and love may be both warm and sincere and yet may be powerless to help us. Before divine mercy can rule in human hearts it must come clad in the armor of almighty power. Let Jesus demonstrate to the world that He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities and that He is mighty to save and strong to deliver and the world cannot help seeing in Him the desire of nations and the Savior of men. These two qualities must be exhibited before the eyes of men before Jesus can gain an entrance to their souls. It became indispensably necessary therefore that Jesus should begin his ministry with the healing of diseases. Had He failed to hear the cry for help which came to Him from the children of affliction or having heard had He refused to respond to it, sin sick souls would never have ventured into His presence, but covering their wounds and bruises and putrifying sores would have slunk back and died in despair. Had Jesus failed to restore the withered arm of the man in the text no palsied soul would ever have stretched its trembling hands towards Him for help. On the other hand let Him pity the suffering wherever He meets them and let Him heal their diseases by miraculous power and every soul

that feels its need of a Savior will lift up its hands to Him for help. He heals bodies only that thus He may reach and save souls.

We are living at a time when strange conceptions of Christian work are afloat in the air. Faith cures, mind cures and Christian Science, all marching under the Christian name, claim that the same miraculous power for healing diseases which Christ and His apostles exercised has ever since existed in the church and that they now possess and have power to exercise it. That cures may be wrought in some cases by operating upon the mind of the patient I have no disposition to deny and am willing to believe. So far from opposing such efforts I wish that the number of their cures might be multiplied a hundredfold. But whatever else these systems may be, they are not Christian—they could be practised by a heathen or an infidel with just as much success as by a follower of Christ. The active agent in such cures is faith, not in Christ but in the faith cure or the mind cure. It is faith either in yourself or in the person operating upon you or both. Christ's mission was not to take our race from under the dominion of disease and death. The children of faith must pass through sickness and death in common with all mankind. Miraculous cures had accomplished their mission when

they had paved the way for the world to accept Jesus as "the mighty to save and strong to deliver," and they then ceased in the church. Since then Christ's voice is heard echoing in the secret chambers of the soul and they that hear shall live. Christ's great work on earth is to cleanse and cure and save the immortal being within. The dwelling place may fall in ruins meanwhile. Never mind. He will rebuild it in due time, and then soul and body redeemed beyond the reach of pain or death shall be reunited alive forevermore.

Forgiveness and Love.

FORGIVENESS AND LOVE.

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

—LUKE VII : 47.

These words form the conclusion and are the application of a parable. In seeking to fathom their meaning we must be careful not to separate them from their connection, for their proper interpretation depends very largely upon their relation to the preceding parable. This is only claiming for the language of the Savior what is demanded for the utterances of any other man. Speech at best is but an imperfect method of conveying thought. No one sentence in any book expresses all that the author means to convey by it. It is expected that its meaning will be shaded and modified or magnified by the shadow of all that has gone before and of all that follows after. No author will consent to be held accountable for the teaching of any single passage of his works unless that passage be taken in its connection and interpreted by the light of its surroundings. Christ's teachings are no exception to the rule. As He employed human language, which is necessarily imperfect and ambigu-

ous, so in seeking to ascertain his meaning in any single passage, we must read all that he has said upon that subject and get the whole chain of thought. Then, from the position which this particular link of truth occupies, it will be easy to see what burden of meaning he meant it to bear.

Now, Jesus, of manifest set purpose, prefaced the passage under consideration by a beautiful parable. In interpreting it, therefore, we must keep His teaching as a whole before us and give to this passage a sense consistent with the whole tenor of the parable.

Simon the Pharisee has taken Jesus home with him to dine, and while they were reclining at meat, a woman of questionable character entered the house, and standing at his feet bathed in tears and holding in her hand an alabaster box of ointment, began to wash Christ's feet with tears; then she wiped them with the hairs of her head and kissed them and anointed them with ointment. Simon the Pharisee knew the character of the woman and felt himself scandalized by the procedure. He did not openly rebuke the woman for her intrusion, nor did he demand of Christ an explanation or reason why He permitted such an unseemly exhibition of affection toward him. He managed to maintain his self composure and to conceal his dis-

pleasure, but beneath a calm exterior his indignation burned against the woman and his distrust kindled against Christ's character. The narrative says "he spake within himself, saying, this man if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner." He said this within himself and never meant that it should go any farther. But Jesus was more of a prophet than he dreamed and knew every thought that was passing in his most secret soul. Simon thought that Christ could not tell the character of the woman that touched him, and Jesus instantly demonstrates to him that He can read the character of Simon's most secret and unspoken thought. Turning to His host the Savior said, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee," and the Pharisee with utmost politeness and deference, responded, "Master, say on." Then Jesus said: "There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both. Tell, me, therefore, which will love him most?" Simon, perplexed to know the meaning of the question and little dreaming that Jesus was preparing an answer to the secret questionings of his soul, replied, "I suppose that he to whom he forgave most." Jesus calmly

responded, "Thou hast rightly judged." Having thus committed the Pharisee to the principle, He next proceeded to apply it. Said He: "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she hath washed my feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman since the time she came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. The premises are thus laid down and it only remains to draw the conclusion. You say that he will love most who has been forgiven most; well, it is perfectly clear that this woman has manifested a love such as you have not shown, and it follows therefore that she must have been forgiven a great deal more than you have."

This is the simple and natural conclusion of the Savior's discourse and this is the sense which logical consistency demands should be given to the text. We are forced thus to understand the passage under consideration or else to suppose that Christ's logic was very faulty. The text as it stands in our version would make the Savior reason thus: The one who has been most forgiven will love me most. This woman loves me most, therefore I am justified in forgiving her many sins.

He first clearly teaches that the forgiveness is the cause of the love and that the extent of the forgiveness will be the measure of the love. Then, if we take the passage just as it reads in our translation, having enumerated the evidences of the woman's affection, He turns directly round and argues that her love is the ground of her forgiveness and that the intensity of her love is the message of her forgiveness. The Savior is represented as saying, "Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." Happily, the passage as it stands in the Greek bears a meaning in perfect harmony with all that precedes and with all that follows, and logical consistency and common sense demand that we give it that construction. Where, in our translation, we read "her sins which are many," in the Greek the verb "are" is wanting and is left to be supplied. Again, where we read "are forgiven," the verb is in the perfect passive and should be translated "have been forgiven." Now suppose we translate the first clause literally, giving the verb its own proper tense, thus, "her sins have been forgiven." Then since the sins are a thing of the past, we are compelled to change the tense of the verb in the next clause since it is left to be supplied, and make it read, "her sins which were many." Combining the

two clauses thus translated, the whole passage will read, "Her sins have been forgiven which were many, for she hath loved much."

Now remembering that this passage is the conclusion of an argument forced by the premises, it follows that the verbs, though in the indicative mood, must be understood as having the force of the potential and as expressing necessity. The Savior simply states as a fact what follows as a necessity from the argument. When we regard the passage thus in its connection, its construction becomes simple and easy. Simon had affirmed that he would love most who had been forgiven most. Jesus then stated, what Simon was forced to admit, that this woman plainly loved most, and the inevitable conclusion was that "her sins which have been forgiven must have been many." This we take to be the proper translation of the passage, this gives a consistent meaning and forms a logical conclusion to the parable.

The principle is here clearly laid down, first, that we are admitted to Christ's presence not because of what we have done for Him, but on account of what he has done for us; and secondly, that our love ought to be in proportion to our forgiveness. Simon had said within himself that the woman was a sinner and that therefore Jesus ought not to ac-

cept her offices of love. He had whispered in his own soul, moreover, that Jesus did not know the character of the woman and had not prophetic vision enough to discover who it was that touched Him or He would not have suffered such contamination. This answer of the Master laid bare the secret thought of Simon's heart and showed him at the same time that Jesus both knew the character of the woman and of his thoughts. It moreover showed how little he knew of the spirit and genius of the religion which Jesus came to establish. Like a great many nowadays this Pharisee thought that a sinner had no right to approach Christ. A self-righteous man like himself might sit down with Him at meat, but a Magdalene must not even shed her tears at His feet. He seemed to think that Christ's kingdom, like an earthly kingdom, had its ranks and degrees of nobility and that men were allowed to approach and serve the king in the order of their rank. He belonged to a moral nobility and was a privileged character, but the woman was a plebeian sinner and without inquiring whether she had reformed and had been forgiven, he could not think that Jesus, if He knew her, would suffer her in His presence.

Christ, on the contrary, taught him that He "came not to call the righteous but sinners to re-

penitence." His invitation was "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." He came to earth not as a sovereign but as a Savior. His mission was "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The whole need not a physician but they that are sick. He did not come to establish a court and thus surround Himself with the morally pure—He came to save the lost and hence He invited the morally impure to gather round Him, that by His touch they might be cleansed from their sins and be lifted into a higher life. He excluded no one from His presence or service, but gave a common invitation to all. They who felt their need of Him most would be the first to come and their felt need of Him was to be the condition of their acceptance when they came. Had the woman still been an unpardoned sinner of the deepest dye she might have come in penitence with perfect confidence that Jesus would not spurn her from His presence. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

But she was not an unpardoned sinner. Jesus plainly states in the text, "Her sins have been forgiven." How long before that pardon had been granted we are not told. Whether Jesus had met her upon a previous occasion and had then for-

given her or whether she had been saved from her sins since she entered Simon's house upon the present occasion we do not know. We only know that she had been pardoned and that her ministrations of love were the result of that pardon. It may be that, like many another sinner, the moment she started to go to Jesus her burden of guilt rolled away and that when she arrived in His presence she felt no need of pleading for pardon and could do nothing but fall at his feet in affectionate devotion. She may not have understood the meaning of the wondrous change which she felt in her soul. Many a man since her day has been released from his sins without knowing at the time that the strange freedom which he felt was "the glorious liberty of the children of God." She knew she loved Christ and that no spot on earth was so dear to her as right at his feet. Her glad soul found vent in joyous tears and her loving, grateful heart poured costliest ointment on the Savior's feet, counting no offering too dear a sacrifice for Christ. She is no longer a sinner, but a new creature. "The things which before she loved now she hates and the things which before she hated now she loves." But it is more than probable that she did not understand the meaning of this moral change—perhaps in the rapture of the moment she did not

stop to ask the name of her deep joy. Jesus understood the case perfectly and in explanation of it all turned to her and said, "Thy sins have been forgiven!" She had been a great sinner, but she was pardoned and saved now, and hence whatever she might have been before would be no bar to keep her back from Christ. As a sinner she could only have approached the Savior in penitence, but as a "sinner saved by grace" she can come to Him now in affection, in worship and in service. When God pardons a man He makes clean work of it. He does not tell him that he is forgiven and then put him under ban ever afterward because he has been a great sinner. I read of the sinner in God's word, "If he turn from his sin and do that which is lawful and right; if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him."

When Jesus pardoned that woman He did not brand her with a scarlet letter after the olden fashion of New England and thus make her an outcast in respectable society. His pardon obliterated all the past and admitted her upon an equal footing to His presence with any other person on earth. We often hear it said, "I can forgive, but I cannot for-

get.” “I could pardon the outcast, but I could not receive her into my house.” Prudential reasons may make it necessary that safeguards should be thrown around human forgiveness. But that is not the way in which Christ forgives. He says, “I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.” He gathers the outcasts right to Himself and takes them into His house. The very fact that we are sinners saved entitles us to a place near the Savior. Not the cold hearted Pharisee who patronizes and treats Christ with respect is accepted of him but the sinner who falls in affection and devotion at his feet.

This woman had sinned greatly, she had been greatly saved; was it any wonder that she loved deeply? John says, “We love Him because He first loved us.” A self-righteous man who feels pretty secure in his own correct life will not feel that Christ has done much for him and in consequence will not fall often in affectionate worship and service at Jesus feet. But oh, in degree as we realize that we were lost and ruined sinners and that Christ’s great salvation plucked us as brands from the burning, we ought in love and gratitude, like the poor sinner in the text, to fall at Jesus’ feet, bathe them in our tears, cover them with kisses and perfume them with costliest ointment. Through

eternity I think we will bless God for two things: first that Jesus both forgave and forgot our sins, restoring us to his presence and favor fully justified, and secondly that we do not and cannot forget that we were sinners saved by Christ. We will rejoice that God does not remember our sins, but we will want to remember them forever, for it is the very fact that we have been greatly saved that makes Jesus our great Savior. We will remember what we were and what He saved us from and love Him all the more because He does not remind us of it. If there is any man on earth that has a right to get near Christ and that Jesus has reason to expect to find near by Him it is the man whose sins have been many and who has been saved from them.

Objects of Faith.

OBJECTS OF FAITH.

What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them* and ye shall have *them*.

We walk in two worlds from the cradle to the grave. Man is made up of body and spirit, and he is placed in a world that is both material and immaterial, and so at every step in life he is treading both upon pavements and promises. Two guides meet man at the threshold of existence to conduct him through life, nor is it possible for him to make the journey without the assistance of both. Sense takes our one hand and faith takes the other, and while the one shows us our way through the life that now is, the other leads us to the life which is to come.

The testimony of our senses is no more direct and positive than that of faith—the only difference between them is that sense brings to the soul the knowledge of material things while faith is the channel through which we receive knowledge of spiritual things. How do I know that there is such a planet as Saturn rolling through space? I was never there. I never saw any one who had been there. I never saw anything in the sky that

looked like a world. With my naked eye I can see only a brilliant point of light in the nightly heavens, and with the most powerful telescope I can see nothing more than a shining ball of light with oval rings of light surrounding it. The truth is, I do not see a world, I only see the light which comes streaming from that planet. But the light which I see has strange stories to tell of the world from which it comes. Upon the testimony of the light alone we learn the size and distance of Saturn from the earth, its course through space and its rate of motion and even determine the elements which enter into its constitution. But for the testimony of the light to our sense of vision we could know nothing about this planet, or ever have known of its existence. We are never brought into direct contact with it and our only knowledge of it comes to us on the wings of the light. Throw suspicion for a moment upon the truthfulness of the story which this dazzling messenger tells and our knowledge of Saturn vanishes into thin air. Our senses create no knowledge; they simply communicate to the soul the testimony which they receive about surrounding objects.

Well, just as God has given us the light to reveal to the soul through the sense of sight the existence and nature of the material bodies which

roll through space, so has He given us the revelation of His word to discover to the soul through the eye of faith the realities of the spirit universe around us. We cannot see Saturn but we can believe that he exists because the light which comes from him tells us all about him and so we can see neither God nor Heaven, but Jesus Christ has come from God out of Heaven to our earth and testifies concerning His Father and His Father's house. He is the light of the world and through the revelation which He has made we can know as much of the spirit-Heaven and know it as directly and as certainly, as we can learn through the senses of the material heavens. The eye is made to convey the light of day to the soul and faith is made to convey the light of Deity to the soul. The sources of the light are different and the channels through which it streams in upon us are different, but the knowledge conveyed is as direct and positive in the one case as in the other.

Does any one question the revelation of God's word? You may as well question the evidences of the senses. False prophets have gone out into the world and there have been spurious revelations. It is possible therefore that faith may be deceived and led astray. But the light in the material world has its aberrations also. Not every-

body that shines in the heavens is a fixed star or a planet. There is many a wandering comet or meteor that shines for a while and then goes out. It is possible that we may misunderstand God's word and thus receive false notions of the Divine nature and law; and so it is certain that the human eye is often diseased and the lens of the telescope is imperfect and in consequence men see only blurred and distorted images of the heavenly bodies. There have been as many blunders in astronomy as there ever have been in theology. But because mistakes are possible, it is not necessary that we should make them either in the universe of matter or of spirit. Amid all the rubbish of exploded science the student can find a plain and solid pathway of truth for his feet and so, amid all the varying creeds and mysteries of religion the road to God is so plain that a "wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein." The imperfections in our knowledge spring from the imperfections of our nature, and neither science nor religion are to blame for them; but however great our ignorance may be, we can walk at least as securely by the light of revelation as we can by the light of nature.

The text addresses the religious side of our natures and calls for the exercise of faith in order to

the realization of our prayers. A man cannot see with his eyes shut, and he cannot see what he desires to unless he have his eyes turned towards the object. And so in religion we will never realize our prayers while faith slumbers, nor yet with faith in full exercise unless faith be directed to the proper object. Men had swept the heavens at random with their telescopes in all directions without discovering the cause of the disturbance among the planets until Leverrier, determining upon the definite spot where a world was needed to balance the planetary system, leveled his glass and gazed intently into space, when lo! Neptune's pale light came breaking through the dark and solved the problem. In religion we often ask and receive not because we ask amiss. We often ask aright and receive not because we believe not, and we often believe and receive not because faith is not directed to the proper object.

First of all, "Whatsoever things we desire when we pray," must be in accordance with God's will, if our prayer is to be granted. Indeed we ought not desire anything which is contrary to the will of God. We may think we need a great many things which God will never grant, because they would not be for our good. His will and our welfare go hand in hand. To ask what is contrary to the Di-

vine will is to pray God to curse and not to bless us. Every Christian prayer ought to conclude in spirit if not in language, "Not my will but thine be done." But, then, we must not only pray for those things which it is God's good pleasure to give, we must also offer our prayers in faith if we would realize their fulfillment. "Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe," said Jesus, "and ye shall have them." "According to your faith so shall it be done unto you." You may call till doomsday, but if you close your ears you will have no answer. You may pray for visions of God till you are grey, but if you do not open the eyes of faith and look you will never see the King in His beauty. When you pray, clear your soul's vision, brush away doubt and misgivings, polish the lenses of faith and let expectancy look out through them from the soul. Watching and prayer go together in more senses than one. When ye pray, watch, look, wait, expect. Ladders of light are set up upon earth which reach unto Heaven now no less than in patriarchal times. Wherever souls are agonizing with God in prayer, the angels are ascending and descending, but too often, like Jacob, faith slumbers and Heaven's visitations only come to us as a dream and we wake to ex-

claim with him, "Surely the Lord was in this place and I knew it not."

But the text teaches further that our faith must be centered upon the proper object if we would realize the fulfillment of our prayers. Mr. Moody once approached a penitent in one of his inquiry meetings and asked him what appeared to be his special difficulty. The man answered, "O, sir, I cannot believe." "Believe what?" asked Mr. Moody. "Can't you believe in the truth of God's word and in the ability and willingness of Jesus to save you?" "O, yes," responded the penitent, "I can easily believe that, but I cannot believe in myself." "I cannot believe that I am a proper subject for saving grace." "Well," replied Mr. Moody, "nobody wants you to believe in yourself, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." We smile at that poor penitent's mistake and yet men are doing the same thing every day and everywhere. There is no more common blunder made in religion than to mistake the proper object of faith. "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth," says God. But instead of looking heavenward and Godward men will look into the large end of the telescope to see how they themselves appear as seen from above. A man reads "He that believeth on the Son of God hath

the witness in himself" and at once he begins to look within to see if the witness is there. But looking at self will never save us and searching for the witness of the Spirit will not bring it into our soul. "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe," says Jesus. But believe what?

Many people have been widely led astray from the true object of faith just by misinterpreting the remainder of this passage. They have supposed the Master here to teach that when they pray for any blessing they are all the while to endeavor to believe that they do experience the thing for which they are pleading. The passage reads, "believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them." And so they conclude that in order to obtain a change of heart we must first believe that we already have it. Must we then believe a falsehood in order to be saved? Does the Master mean to teach in this passage that when we pray we must believe that we are in possession of the blessings which we desire in order to come into their possession? A careful examination of the passage will show both how great is the error of such a supposition and what is the true object of our belief.

Two objects of faith are clearly implied here: first, God's promise, and second, God's veracity. We have already seen that we must neither desire

nor ask anything which is not in accordance with the Divine will, because it would not be for our good. All things which are for our good have been made the subjects of Divine promise; for our Heavenly Father has bound Himself by a promise to "withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly." But, like many an earthly parent, God suspends many blessings which He has in waiting for His children upon the condition of their asking for them. "Ask, and it shall be given you." "If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it" is the broad invitation which Heaven extends to the children of men. Now, when we ask anything in prayer, the first object of faith is the fact that God has promised it. You must first rest in an unwavering belief that your petition is bounded on all sides by Divine promise and environment in the Divine will, or your prayer will be in vain. But having settled the fact that you are asking only what God's word has promised, the next object of faith is God's veracity. He has promised, will He be true to His word? There must be no faltering here. Doubt must suggest no "maybe" or "perhaps" in the case. Faith must grapple as with hooks of steel upon the truth that God's promises are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. "He is faithful that promised," and our

faith must anchor itself deep in the Divine faithfulness, believing without tremor or doubt that He will fulfill all His word.

These two objects of faith are implied in the text; a third is clearly expressed, viz.: that our prayer is granted. There is logic in faith as well as in reason. Believe, as premises, that God has promised the thing for which you pray and that He is true to His word, and you are forced to the conclusion that He does grant your prayer. Belief in the promise and veracity of God are two lenses in faith's telescope—make them perfectly clean, and properly adjust them and you cannot look steadily through them without seeing your request fulfilled. But, dazzled by the light which comes streaming through them, faith often closes its eyes and hesitates or refuses to look the truth squarely in the face that its prayer has prevailed and that its petition is granted. Now Jesus in the text places faith in focus and bids the praying soul look through it to God. "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them." You believe that God has promised them, you believe that God is faithful to His word. He has said "Ask, and ye shall receive;" you have asked, now believe that ye re-

ceive, believe that, true to His promise, He this moment grants your prayer.

Ah, but, says one, I don't feel any change of heart. Never mind; that is not the object of faith but the result and fruit of it. The assurance of faith must precede the realization of experience. You must first believe that you have received salvation as a grant from God before you can realize it as a personal experience, but believe that ye receive it as a gift on the part of God and ye shall have it as a possession of the soul. Let me illustrate. Here is a youth who has not yet attained his majority. He is far away from home, but one day a letter and a package reach him through the mail. He opens the letter and reads that his father is dead and that he has bequeathed to him the old homestead. He next breaks the package and there finds a certified copy of his father's will. There is no mistake about it, it bears the seal of the court and is properly signed and attested. As the letter informed him, the whole of his father's landed estate is bequeathed to him. Now, he does not come into actual possession of the property until he reaches twenty-one years of age. But he receives it as an inheritance now. The title rests in him from the present moment. The transfer is complete in law now, though the transfer in fact

will not take place until several years hence. Does he believe that he receives that property before he actually gets it? Let him convince himself that the will conveys it to him and that the will will certainly be executed, and he regards himself that moment as the owner of the whole estate, and from that time forward will esteem himself and will be esteemed by others as a landed proprietor and a man of fortune.

Far away from his Father's house the sinner receives God's message and this Bible containing his Father's will. It grants to him more than houses and lands upon the condition of his asking for them in faith. When he has complied with the conditions must he wait until he comes into actual possession of them before he claims them as his? Why, the moment he calls upon God believing in His promise and veracity, he becomes an heir of God and the wealth of the everlasting Father is his. The inheritance belongs to the heir and all that God's will has promised is now transferred to him in right. Let him believe that he receives it this moment as his inheritance and he shall have it by and by as his possession. Do you tell me that he feels no change? Can a man believe that he has been changed from an heir of death to an heir of everlasting life and feel no change? Can

a slave believe that he has been adopted as the son of a king and not feel that he is a new man? Let a man believe that he is an heir of God and he will enter into the enjoyment of his inheritance long before he reaches his Father's house.

Or take another illustration. There is a culprit who has been tried and convicted of murder and has been sentenced to death. Behind iron bars he rattles his chains and awaits the day of his execution. As a last resort he sends an appeal to the governor of the state invoking the executive pardon. A few days thereafter the keeper of the prison hands him an envelope through the grates of his cell. He opens it and reads that in answer to his petition the governor has freely pardoned him and set him at full liberty. The signature is unmistakably genuine and the document bears the big seal of the state. Does he believe that he is a free man? Why, his cell is still barred and bolted, his manacles are still on and he is clothed in the prison garb. Can he feel free while he is yet a prisoner in chains? Go ask him, and you shall find that he dates his freedom from the moment he received the pardon. Prison dress and chains and bars set lightly on his soul. He asked pardon and freedom, he believes that he has received them, and he shall have them. He does not look at him-

self and say, Why, I see no change; if I am pardoned these manacles ought to be off and these doors ought to be open. He rivets his gaze upon the document which he holds in his hand and exclaims, This is the governor's pardon; I have received it, I am therefore free in law and soon shall be in fact.

Every sinner occupies that prisoner's cell. We have all been condemned by the law and sentenced to death. The angel of the Gospel came and whispered that there was "forgiveness with God that he might be feared;" and so we tremblingly sent our petition to the great governor of the universe for pardon. In due time the answer came—here we have it in God's word: "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, and though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more." O, brother sinner, don't look at yourself and say, Why, here are the scarlet and crimson stains still; I don't feel the change that I expected; I am not yet entirely released from my bondage. Fix the eye of your faith on God Almighty's pardon

bearing the seal of the cross, stamped in the blood of the Lamb, believe that you have received salvation and you shall have it. Accept it by faith and you will have it in fact.

False Christs.

FALSE CHRISTS.

For there shall arise false Christs.—Matthews XXIV : 24.

We are accustomed to regard this and similar passages of Scripture as belonging to an age long since past and gone. At once, upon reading them, we think of the numerous impostors that appeared about the time of our Savior's advent, claiming to be the Messiah, and who each succeeded in deceiving large numbers of people. Perhaps we come down as late as the days of Mahomet, and count him among the number. But farther down the ages we never go in search of false Christs. Here we pause and feel assured that these prophecies have had their fulfillment.

The thought is seldom entertained for a moment that it is possible for a rival Christ to arrive in our day. Superstition and credulity we loudly boast have been so far exterminated by the advance of knowledge and general intelligence, that an impostor who should lay claim to Messiahship now would find it difficult to hoodwink the people, and would be almost certain of speedy exposure and defeat. It is possible for us thus to rest in fancied security when danger is at the door. It should

never be forgotten that Jesus represents the age of false Christs, not as that immediately succeeding His own, but as the last days. I grant that it is exceedingly improbable that we shall ever behold a man laying claim to Messiahship. The difficulties in the way of sustaining the character of Christ are such that none but a madman would undertake it, and such an one would meet with poor success. But while there is no room for fear that any man can ever so imitate the life and character of Jesus as to become a dangerous rival, we should not forget that false Christ's may enter the world and walk the earth in other forms than those of flesh and blood. The very learning that makes us secure against any human impostor may introduce a false Christ in a subtler and much more dangerous form.

The truth is that the boasted progress of modern times has almost lost sight of the simple Jesus of Nazareth, and in His stead has set up a score of rivals, as unlike Him as the cold corpse is unlike the living, breathing, loving man. The Christ that was born in Bethlehem has now to compete with the Christ born in a poet's fancy, in a philosopher's studio, or in some sentimentalist's brain. The noble, grand, yet simple Nazarene has been stripped again and again of His own plain garments and

clothed as often with purple robes by sacrilegious hands, until in the popular Christ of to-day you can hardly recognize the features of Him who needed no purple to make Him a king.

It would be an endless task to outline all the characters that men have ascribed to Christ. Within the time allotted to a sermon we can only glance at a few of the false Christs that have gone out into the world. A few, however, may serve as types of all.

And first we may name, as having appeared first in chronological order, the Christ of Art. We have become so accustomed to the paintings of the old masters that we are not startled by their misrepresentation. Indeed, their conceptions have so moulded our ideals of Christ that we very generally accept the Messiah on their canvas as the Jesus of the New Testament. But if, never having seen the Savior represented in pictures, and, having formed our conception of Him only from the study of the Scriptures, we should enter some gallery of old paintings, we should be startled to find here and there all along the walls a noble, manly figure with a halo painted round his brow. If he were seated upon a throne, we might easily conjecture that he represented the glorified and ascended Jesus in Heaven. But in one place we

find Him in the act of blessing children, in another, seated with twelve men at table, and in still another, nailed to a cross. He is always surrounded by earthly objects, and yet the halo always encircles His head. This picture would be so unlike the one painted by the evangelists that we should hardly recognize in it the simple Nazarene. No halo glows round Christ's brow in the New Testament. The evangelists' account of Him encircles his head but twice, once with thorns and once with a napkin. At all other times, if we except the transfiguration, having taken upon himself the form of a servant, He appears simply as the carpenter's son, with nothing to mark His peerless rank. The glory of His humiliation was that He so completely smothered the fires of deity beneath His humanity that they never blazed out but once, and then only for an instant on a lonely mountain top with but three apostles as witnesses.

But our wonder at this false Christ of art would cease perhaps, when, looking a little farther, we beheld this same halo round an infant brow, and that infant form folded in the arms of a mother over whose head another circle of light was hovering. This painting would be a very old one. A later one would represent the Son sitting on a throne with the mother crowned and sitting at His

feet. A still later one would represent the Mother and the Son sitting side by side to indicate their equality. In one later still we should find the mother on a throne above the Son. And last of all we should find a picture representing the Son in wrath about to destroy the earth, and the virgin mother interposing to save mankind. Would any reader of the Bible dream that this was Mary and her Son Jesus? Where in all the Gospel records is the virgin mother associated with the Messiah? As if to prevent this very error, Christ said to her when at Cana she assumed to command His miraculous power, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" He thus denied her right to command, while with the affection of a son He did what she desired. Still later in life, He absolved Himself as Messiah, from all ties and obligation of kindred. "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" asked the Master. In the next breath He answers, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother." The Christ of the New Testament has no associate in His mediatorial office, and this, therefore, that we behold, is a false Christ of Art.

But, leaving the picture gallery, with its mildewed canvas, let us enter the public libraries and the great schools of Christendom, and mingle

with the minds that are exercising a world-wide influence in the education of the present day. Find we no false Christs here? Take up Strauss and carefully peruse him, and you shall not read far before you come to the bald statement that Jesus Christ is only a myth. That no such person ever lived on the earth. That He is only the ideal hero of fictitious Gospels. He talks of Christ, but his Christ is neither God nor man—he is simply an idea; he existed neither in Heaven nor on earth, but only in the minds of men. He is simply the philosopher's "summum bonum," the poet's "beau ideal." Strauss does not assail the faultless character ascribed by the evangelists to our Savior. He knew too well that the world would never consent to be robbed of that precious model; but, separating it from the living Nazarene, he holds the lifeless, ideal character up before men and calls this corpse Christ. He reminds one very much of Jacob's sons, who, while they could coolly murder or sell their brother Joseph, could not part with his coat of many colors but must strip him and bring it back all bloody to the homestead to mock the patriarch's grief. I call this mythical Jesus a false Christ upon the authority of God's word and is the teaching that would blot out Christ's real existence any better than the murderous voices of

the mob who originally cried, "Away with Him, crucify Him, crucify Him"? "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is not of God, and this is that spirit of anti-christ whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world."

This myth, however, is not the only false Christ that has gone out in philosophy. Rationalism has given birth to another and a very different one. Here we find Jesus invested with flesh and blood and fully granted an actual and natural existence on the earth. But rationalism admits nothing supernatural, and hence it denies the Divine in His nature, and the miraculous in His life. It makes Him a sublime teacher and a lofty model of moral purity and experience; but, by denying His Divinity, it takes all authority from His teachings and blasts His morality by branding Him as an impostor. It cannot be questioned that He claimed to be Divine and constantly represented Himself as the Son of God. If, therefore, He was only a man, He must either have been a deluded fanatic, or an unprincipled deceiver.

Renan does not hesitate to deny His divinity and to affirm that He was both a fanatic and a deceiver. His Christ was an enthusiastic young man whose mission was to reform the morals of the

people. For this purpose, because the masses demanded prodigies as proof, He feigned the performance of miracles which He had no power to work. As the penalty of His enthusiasm and deception He was crucified by the legal authorities and buried in a criminal's grave. Regarding Him simply as a man, this author refuses to follow Him farther than the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, declaring His work as a biographer to be ended when his hero is dead, and scouting the alleged resurrection on the third day as too absurd for serious investigation. The author of *Ecce Homo*, less bold and more reverential, but scarcely less rationalistic, disposes of all that was supernatural in the birth and early history of Jesus by leaping over thirty years of His life and commencing His biography "at a time when he whom we call Christ bore no such name, but was simply . . . a young man of promise, popular with those who knew him and appearing to enjoy the Divine favor." One author passes over in silence the supernatural manner in which Jesus entered our world and never mentions His miraculous conception and the strange surrounding of His birth. Another ignores altogether the supernatural manner in which He left the earth, and sneers at the possibility of His resurrection, while both unite to explain away

all that was miraculous in His public ministry. Thus having shorn Him of His locks of strength and made Him weak like other men, they condescend to admit His many simply human virtues and to call Him Christ. A myth and a man stalk boldly through rationalistic philosophy and are each called Christ by high authority. The one is an idea that never wore flesh and blood, the other is a being that never "came in the flesh" because he never existed out of the flesh, he is a man "of the earth, earthy." Both are false Christs, the bastard offspring of brains that assume to be wise above that which is written. Let revelation be repeated: "Whosoever shall not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God."

Another false Christ we meet, not in painting galleries, nor in schools and libraries, but out in society everywhere. It is the Christ of humanitarianism. In every village and hamlet of our country men are to be found who deny eternal punishment. They tell us that God is too good and merciful to take vengeance upon those who obey not the Gospel of His Son, notwithstanding the Bible declares exactly the contrary. Justice has been expunged from their Gospel and they read only gentleness, forbearance and mercy in Christ. Providence with them is simply reformatory and never punitive.

And beyond this world there is one glorious Heaven the common home of all our race. When God sends a deluge and destroys the wicked inhabitants of the earth, it is only to wash away their sins and take their spirits home to Heaven. Noah, because he was righteous, must outride the storm and linger longer on the earth; the others, because they were wicked, were transported to glory. There is no hell in the humanitarian Gospel, and hence every man must go to heaven. Murderers, assassins, pirates, robbers, burglars, thieves, incendiaries, libertines and blasphemers are all welcomed by a Christ who is all mercy, to the city of pearly gates and golden streets. Judas, after betraying the Savior, committed suicide, and he, therefore, reached Heaven before his Lord. The drunkard who dies in delirium tremens, wakes amid the glories of paradise, while the sober man of God lives on to sigh and weep amid the sorrows of earth.

Nay, more, this milk and water Gospel teaches that men should be like Christ, and since God will not punish the guilty, they must be all mercy to criminals. It loudly clamors for the abolition of capital punishment, not as a matter of expediency, or as a measure by which to prevent the execution of the innocent, but because of sympathy for the

guilty. Prisons, too, must be fitted up with all the "modern improvements" for the comfort and convenience of their occupants. Prison discipline also must be exceedingly mild and the men who trampled law beneath their feet must be treated with great respect by the law. Singularly enough this sympathy is not excited in behalf of the innocent. A murdered family, a house in flames kindled by an incendiary's torch, or a widow robbed of the last mite of her savings, never suggests measures for protection. But when the man is found whose hands are red with innocent blood, or black with the smoke of the fire which he kindled, or still grasping the gold which he stole, this tender-hearted sympathy blazes up into a flame and pronounces all punishment barbarous and cruel. The only remedy of this Gospel for crime is a prayer and a tract. It is not my province to discuss the expediency of modifying the penalties of our criminal code—this is a matter for jurists and politicians to settle. But I should be unworthy a place in the pulpit if I did not pronounce false any system which represents Christ as wanting in justice or that teaches that His religion forbids the punishment of crime. A Christ that has no punishment for criminals here nor for incorrigible sinners hereafter, is not the Christ of the New Testa-

ment. I read from Scripture, "But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he (the civil ruler) beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." God does not grant a severer justice to man than he exercises himself, hence I read Christ's own words addressed to the hypocritical Pharisees, "Ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." "Then shall He—(the Son of Man at the judgment)—say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The humanitarian's Christ, with no justice, is powerless either to protect by human government the innocent of society on earth, or to reward the holy, by exalting them above the wicked, in Heaven. The Jesus of Nazareth was not wanting in mercy as His blood-stained cross will testify, but that mercy was wedded to a stern justice that demanded respect for His law, and furnished protection for His people. In the Nazarene justice towers like a mighty oak, while mercy twines herself like an ivy round its rugged trunk and hangs in graceful dependence from every bough.

Many false Christs have gone out into the world of which I have named but a few, and the one great lesson taught by this fact is that the world cannot do without a Christ. One may rob Him of His Deity, another of His humanity, and still another of His attributes, but the desolate heart of the race will not let go altogether of its Savior. Men may tear the vines with their rich clusters from the trellis and cover it all over with wild and poisonous weeds, but with the trellis they cannot dispense. They may strip the Nazarene, may crown Him with thorns or clothe Him with purple, but the underlying idea of a Christ is indispensable to the human heart.

Since, then, we must have a Christ, let us turn from the false to the true. There He stands—not a mere myth nor yet with a halo round His brow, but a man of like passions with ourselves. “Not a man who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.” Bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, a man among men.

But look again and behold not merely the Son of Man, but the Son of God as well. The babe of Bethlehem is the “Ancient of Days.” He who came in the flesh, existed before flesh was made. He declares Himself, “Before Abraham was, I

am.” “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. and the Word was God; and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” The “Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” is at the same time, “Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace.” Humanity is instinct with Deity and “the man who had not where to lay His head” is “God over all, blessed forever.”

His life was not an illusion, it was real and natural. “He grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor both with God and man.” He grew hungry and weary and sad like other men. He ate and slept and wept and suffered and died in common with all our race. His life was touchingly beautiful in its simple naturalness; but then the natural in Him was supplemented by all that was astoundingly supernatural and miraculous. His voice, so low and sweet that it hushed the wail of sorrow, was, at the same time, so shrill and loud that it penetrated the grave, and brought the dead back to life. His hand, so human that it could be nailed to a cross, was at the same time so Divine that miracles throbbed in every finger, and its lightest touch sufficed to feed the hungry, to heal the sick and to restore sight to the blind. He could suffer, groan and die like a man, but the granite walls of

the tomb were flimsy as gossamer when the supernatural within Him told Him it was time for Him to rise. His walk through life was in the common path that men had traveled for ages, but as He passed over it, it glittered with the wonders of Heaven. His sandals made only human tracks in the sand, but in those tracks He left gold dust and jewels, as though He had just stepped from the mosaic pavement of the skies. His life, so simple and human, was crowned and covered with the miraculous glory of Heaven. His public ministry is explicable only by the miracle of His incarnation and both are enigmas that can never be solved without the miracle of His resurrection. The natural and the supernatural are inseparably interwoven in the birth, life and death of the true Christ. He entered our world through a curtain of mystery, through life He communed with the invisible, and at last a cloud received Him out of sight.

His attributes were so nicely poised that men approached Him with confidence and left Him with reverence. They feared while they loved, and loved while they feared. His brow was all sunlight to the penitent, but all storm to the wicked. His mercy went down as deep as suffering

had ever penetrated, and His justice rose as high as wrong had ever climbed. There was something in His very presence that distilled hope into the despairing soul, and something also, that made the hypocritical and the proud cower and tremble. His very character was a constant encouragement to the fallen who desired to rise, and a perpetual condemnation to the impenitent wicked. Men could not help but feel that He was a "Lord of long suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression," but that at the same time He was one "who would by no means clear the guilty." Justice in Him made mercy strong, and mercy made justice lovely. The shield of the one accompanied the sword of the other and made Him as strong to punish His enemies as to protect His children. Such is the Christ of the New Testament. There He stands, the uncrowned and untitled Nazarene, simple in His Godlike grandeur and grand in His human simplicity, towering as high above all false Christs as the pyramid of Cheops above the sand hills of the Nile. Perish the Christs which human art and philosophy have conceived, but let the Son of God and Mary live forever!

Banish, brother, from your head and heart these false Christs that have no atoning blood, and climb

by faith within sight of Calvary's gory cross. Call only Jesus, Christ, for in Him alone have we salvation, and in His Gospel have human governments hope.

The Heavenly Guest.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock ; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.—Revelation III : 20.

These words formed one of the utterances which fell upon the ear of the revelator on a Sabbath day upon the island of Patmos. With the soft light of an eastern Sabbath came to him the clearer light of the Holy Ghost. He “was in the spirit on the Lord’s day.” A Divine vision settled down upon him, the earth faded from view and Heaven opened all around him. As he stood thus in a sea of bewildering glory, he heard behind him a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, “I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, and what thou seest write in a book and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia, unto Ephesus and unto Smyrna and unto Pergamos and unto Thyatira and unto Sardis and unto Philadelphia and unto Laodicea.” “And being turned, he saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot and girt about the paps with a golden girdle; his head and his

hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." The vision was overpowering to St. John and he fell to the earth as dead. Then the same glorious being whom he had seen laid his right hand upon him, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore and have the keys of hell and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen and the things which are and the things which shall be hereafter." He then proceeded to deliver to John a separate message for each of the seven churches. At the conclusion of the last one of these, he gives utterance to the sublime and astounding declaration which forms our text, viz.: that He who has the keys of death and hell, stands at the door of human hearts and knocks for admittance, promising if any man will open the door He will come in and inaugurate a joyous spirit festival.

In this passage we have clearly indicated, first the relation which Christ, in the work of personal

salvation sustains to the sinner. He stands at the door of his heart and knocks. He neither employs force nor subtlety to gain an entrance. He will not break open the door of human will or affection, nor will He secretly steal into the heart, or insinuate Himself into the affections in an unguarded moment. With reverence we say it, He cannot force admittance into a human soul. He can speak a world from nought, He can command legions of angels with a single word, He can say to the devil "Get thee behind me, Satan," and His mandate must be obeyed; He can command the obedience and homage of all heaven's hosts, and make hell tremble by a nod, and can break all the sepulchres of earth and call their sleeping dead to life by a single word, but He cannot carry the citadel of one human soul by storm. The image of God which the Creator gave man when He gave him being, like the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled upon the doorposts in Egypt, forbids all violence upon the soul within. Jesus has left Heaven for us, has wrapped Himself in the robe of our humility, has suffered shame, insult and death in order to save us. He now pleads with us and for us and begs us to be reconciled to God. He shows us His dripping wounds, lets the light of the jewelled crown, which He holds out to our

acceptance, sparkle in our eye; He comes to the very door of our heart and whispers His love to us but there He must stop and there He must stand until man unbars his soul and lets Him in. His scepter over human hearts is love, not force. He can woo and importune forever, but coerce never.

The law of England protects as sacred the rights of every man's home and make its occupant supreme ruler within its walls. A British orator has said in substance that each man's home is his castle—no matter though it be but a hovel. The stars may look down through its broken roof upon the family circle; the rain and the winds of Heaven may enter it at every crevice, but the king cannot; he dare not. The human soul is man's castle and he is lord of it. It may be all in ruins. Evil may crawl among its broken columns and arches at will, leaving the slime of its trail in its most sacred courts; temptation may enter at every door and window and whistle with irresistible fury through all its corridors and turrets. But the King of high Heaven cannot enter until man opens the door and invites him in. When Jesus stands at the door and knocks, He does all that God in His omnipotence can do to save us. He does not knock once and then leave us forever. It

is no hurried rapping that the Savior makes at our heart as He quietly passes us by. No, He stops and "stands at the door and knocks." Patiently He waits and knocks again and again. Sometimes He calls softly and gently says, "Son. daughter, give me thy heart," at other times He knocks loudly and thunders in our heavy ears, "Prepare to meet thy God." Now His rappings sound like the silvery notes of a shepherd's bell calling the lambs of the flock to His arms, and anon they sound like the trumpets of judgment summoning a world to its final account. He knocks by His spirit and troubles our sleep. There are times when we cannot tell why it is that we are so much troubled on account of sins and feel so much our need of a Savior. Our hearts unaccountably yearn after an indwelling Christ at times when all is prosperous around us and no warning voice is heard. It is God's Spirit knocking with a soft hand at the door of our conscience. Again Christ knocks by His providences. When He crowns the fields with yellow harvests and whitens the hills with skipping flocks, when store houses are full and health and plenty fill the home with gladness, Jesus then is standing with the wand of prosperity in His hands, knocking at the door of your heart. "The goodness of God leadeth us to repentance." If we hear

not this, He then knocks with the iron knuckles of adverse fortune and in that knocking we may hear the crackling of burning houses, the cries of want and distress, the Peter-like denial of former friends, turned false; aye, we may hear in it the clatter of the bier, the rumbling of the hearse, and falling of clods in new-made graves. Very often the bolts and bars of a hard heart that could be opened by no other means, give way beneath this kind of knocking. Jesus will not give over His efforts to save the soul until He has employed the last resource at His command, and hence, if neither His blood nor His blessing will win for Him admittance, He withdraws the shield of His protection for awhile to make us feel our helplessness and dependence in order that we may become willing to accept His aid. "He does not willingly afflict us." "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." He makes us weep only in order that tears may wash the film from our eyes so that we may see Him as He is. He makes our hearts bleed only to reduce the worldly fever that is consuming us and driving us mad. If He knocks loudly it is because He sees the imminence of our danger and is painfully anxious to save us.

O, how long the blessed Savior has been standing at the door of our hearts and knocking! He

stood there in childhood's happy hours and said "Suffer little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." He was there all through the thoughtless, careless years of youth, whispering, "They that seek me early shall find me." He is there still in the day of our mature manhood, saying, "Come now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet I will make them like wool, and though they be red like crimson I will make them whiter than snow." Aye, with some of us He has been standing there until age has silvered our heads and furrowed our cheeks, and now in our declining years He calls and asks, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will you die?" Methinks I see Him standing at the door of the hearts which are barred and bolted against Him. His locks are wet with the dews of the night, His hands are bleeding with repeated knocking, His voice has grown hoarse with ceaseless pleading; there is a tear in His eye and a tear in His tone, as looking upward to His Father He exclaims, "I came unto my own and my own received me not." "They will not come unto me that they might have life." "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

Let us now turn to inquire what the text teaches in regard to man's duty and responsibility in the work of his personal salvation. "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in," says Jesus. Man is here represented as occupying the inside of an impregnable fortress and as having the power to defy Jesus to enter. Man's power of resistance against Divine influence is next to omnipotent. Even the cross cannot break the shield of one stubborn human will. Man can, if he will, be damned, in spite of all that God can do to save him. Jesus may stand and knock at the door of his heart until death turns the lock and takes the key, but if man closes his ears against his voice and refuses to open the door, he will go down to the grave with no more of God or of hope in his soul than if the Savior had not died. All the lessons taught by pious parents, all the prayers of the Christian church, all the warnings of God's holy word, all the influences of the Holy Spirit, all the teachings of Providence and all the pleadings of a Savior's blood and love are powerless to make one breach in the citadel of the soul that wills to be lost. One human will, even though it be the feeblest one on earth, can take its stand upon the very verge of hell and triumphantly defy all the angelic armies of God and even the omnipotent

arm of Jehovah Himself to snatch it from the jaws of death. If man will not open the door, Jesus never can come in. If you will not be saved, there is no power in the universe to prevent your being damned.

But while man is thus armed with a power that can certainly condemn, he has no power by which, independent of Christ, he can be saved. He can keep Christ out, but he cannot compel Christ to come in. Man can change his appearance so that the beggar shall look like a king; he can change his life so that the vile sinner shall appear pure and moral; he can even change his mind, so that the ignorant poor shall become the learned savant, but he cannot change his heart. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil," says God's word. We sometimes talk of our good deeds and much more frequently think of them, as fitting us in some sense for a home in Heaven. When Jesus asks admission to the soul, we sometimes reply that we go to church, we read the Bible, we observe the Sabbath, we deal honestly, we are moral people. We fondly dream that these things are an equivalent to, and are a substitute for, repentance and faith. Perhaps we do not realize the truth, but every time we thus rely upon

what we can do, for salvation, we as certainly reject Christ as our Savior as did the Jews who cried "Away with Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Let us not be deceived, "there is no other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ." There is no substitute for the blood of crucifixion. Of all the white robed throng that the revelator saw in Heaven, there was not one who had not washed his robe and made it white in the blood of the Lamb. There is no such thing as cleansing a soul from sin except by admitting Christ into it. The poet had the inspiration of Scripture when he sung, "Jesus, thy blood, thy blood alone, hath power sufficient to atone." With Christ excluded from the heart, "all our righteousness is but as filthy rags" before God—it is only "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." We have seen that Jesus can not save the soul without man's consent, and it is just as certain that man is powerless to save himself without divine assistance.

It is only when God and man join hands and work together that salvation is possible. Jesus has His part to perform and we have ours. It is His to stand at the door and knock, and it is ours to hear His voice and open the door.

We must first hear His voice, we must read His word or hear it read. I do not mean simply that we must run our eyes along the sacred page or be within the sound of some voice that is repeating the sacred text; I mean to read or hear God's word with a mind open to conviction and eager for its teachings. The Greek text of the New Testament gives exactly what it is to hear aright. In the passage, "If he hear thee, well, but if he will not hear thee, tell it to the church," etc., the original reads: "If he hear thee, well, but if he hear thee to one side, tell it to the church." In both cases the man heard, but only in the one he listened. When he hears to one side or when he hears with no intention to heed, the translators render it very properly "not hearing." It is true with wonderful exactness that the man who thus hears, does not hear Christ's voice. He may hear the voice of the person speaking to him, but he does not hear the voice of the Master who speaks to and through the person. If we would hear Christ's voice, we must have a willing, eager, attentive heart when we read or listen to the word of God. But God speaks not only through His word to man—He has a thousand voices or rather thousands of His works echo the one clear voice of God. He speaks

through all His providences to us and nature all around us is vocal with His pleadings and His warnings. If we are eager listeners, Christ's voice can be heard anywhere. A great poet has truthfully said, "The contemplative mind hears tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones and good in everything."

To hear Christ's voice is the first duty imposed upon the sinner in order to his salvation, but this is only preparatory to another. He must next open the door of his heart. To hear the demand of Jesus without complying, is to sink the soul deeper in guilt instead of lifting it to salvation.

But what is it to open the door? This implies, first that we must give our consent that Jesus may come in and take possession of our hearts. No man ever yet was saved, nor ever will be, without his own consent. It is not enough that we are willing to be saved—few indeed are not—but we must consent to be saved by admitting the Savior. Jesus came to save men from their sins, not in their sins. He cannot, while excluded from the soul, throw the mantle of His holiness over us and hide our sins. This would be to make us the "whited sepulchres" described in the Gospel, "beautiful without, but within full of dead men's bones." Christ's religion is not a convex lens that

collects the rays of holiness and converges them upon an object, it is a central fire that radiates its light in every direction. It does not work from without inward, but, like leaven, it works from centre to circumference. In order that the soul may be saved from sin, Jesus must come in and commence the work of regeneration at the very core of our being. To open the door, therefore, means that we give our consent that Jesus shall enter, fill and cleanse our hearts.

But it means more; simple consent is expressive of a state of indifference. We give our consent to things in which we feel no interest, and concerning which we have no choice. Such a state would be fitly described by unbolting and unbarring the door, without opening it to the one who knocks for admittance. The stranger would thus be left free to open the door and come in unbidden if he chose, or he might stand all night without, and neither invitation nor entreaty would tell him there was a welcome for him within. Christ does not obtrude Himself unwelcomed into the chambers of the soul. We must do more than unbar the door, we must open it, and entreat the Savior to make our soul His home. The soul that would be saved must not be indifferent in regard to Christ's entrance. It must not throw the responsibility of

its salvation upon the Savior—it must be earnest, anxious, importunate that Jesus should come in.

Again, to open the door implies an open reception of the Master. Christ never enters a soul clandestinely, however much we may desire, and however strongly we may plead for it. He will not come in by any private, secret entrance. He must be an honored guest, openly received and openly confessed or He must stand without forever. So long as the soul is ashamed of its guest and seeks some secluded spot or some unnoticed time to admit Him, Jesus' presence will never gladden its gloomy portals. The maddest thing that man ever does is to be ashamed of Christ.

“Ashamed of Jesus! Just as soon

Let midnight be ashamed of noon.”

Not until we throw wide open the door of the soul, that the world may see its desolateness, and are willing that Jesus may enter, while millions are gazing, to gild its mouldy walls with the glory of His smile, need we expect the Prince of Peace either to come in or to cease His knocking.

Lastly, to open the door, implies that doubt and distrust of the person asking admittance have given place to faith and confidence. We do not admit to our homes persons in regard to whose character we entertain distrust or suspicion. Against

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all such the door is closed. Not until we are assured of their character and feel that we can trust them and repose confidence in them do we welcome them to the family circle. So also must faith and affection throw their arms round the Savior when He enters the soul to assure Him of welcome. Aye, faith must throw open the door and extend a warm hand to Jesus saying:

“Come in, come in, thou heavenly Guest,
Nor hence again remove;
But sup with us and let the feast
Be everlasting love.”

In the moment that man thus throws open the door, the mighty Jesus walks in, the light of His countenance illuminates the dark caverns of the soul and the trail of His priestly robes wipes all the spots and stains away until even the chambers that were crimson with guilt are made whiter than snow.

Turn we now for a brief moment to the banquet that follows the Savior's entrance. But a moment before the soul was a fortress, at whose gate were marshalled all man's forces to dispute Christ's entrance. Then, through all its avenues were heard sounds of strife and alarm. Tears, sighs and groans told how sad and doleful was the

place where Jesus was shut out. Jesus enters, and in a moment that soul is transformed into a festal hall. Garlands of flowers strew the path in which the Savior treads; the sword and shield of strife are gone and olive branches of peace wave their green leaves everywhere. The sounds of moaning and crying are hushed, and flute like notes of soft, sweet song are heard. The banquet board is spread and the first fruits of the vintage cover it over. There is glad thanksgiving and then there are sounds of mirth and feasting within. Jesus says, "If any man will open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with me."

I used to read this passage when a boy, thinking there was tautology in it. I could see no difference between Christ's supping with us, and our supping with Him. I have long since discovered my error and have learned that the difference is greater than that between day and night. Jesus first sups with us. He requires that we shall set before Him our choicest affections, our purest devotion, our most faithful obedience and claims them all as His right, nor will He remain in a soul that does not cheerfully yield them up to Him. To the true Christian heart Christ never comes nearer than when He condescends to sup with it. O, the thought is overpowering that Heaven's glo-

rious King will come down from His throne to the peasant hut of our heart and will accept the rude fare of our poor love, worship and service. Man was never honored more, and Jesus never stooped lower than when He promised to sup with us.

But He does not come to rob us. He will accept the crust that alone we can offer, but when our scanty meal is ended, He then spreads His banquet board. We then shall sup with Him. Into our poor soul He will pour the rich treasure of His love; His blessings shall come clustering in upon us like the fruit of the vine, we shall partake of the nectar that makes angels strong and feast our souls upon "marrow and fat things." What we gave to Him was "only a crust of coarse, brown bread and water out of a wooden bowl, but with fine wheaten bread will our souls be fed and it is red wine we will drink with our thirsting soul." We give Him our poor heart and, wondrous condescension, He accepts it and He then gives us in return the great heart of God. Would we be happy in a Savior's love, we must hear His voice when He speaks, must open the door when He knocks, and must give Him our hearts when He enters.

The Order of Melchisedek.

THE ORDER OF MELCHISEDEK.

Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.—Hebrews VII: 17.

These words suggest three questions, viz.: Who was Melchisedek; To what order of priesthood did he belong, and In what respects was Jesus a priest of that same order? Melchisedek is mentioned but twice in the Old Testament Scriptures, once in the 110th Psalm where the Psalmist, harping the praises of the Messiah, sings in the identical language of the text, "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek," and once in the 14th chapter of Genesis where the meeting between him and Abraham is described. This earliest mention of him contains our only information concerning this remarkable character. We are here told that Chedorlaomer and his confederates having defeated the Kings of Sodom and Gomorrah with their allies in the vale of Siddim, took Lot and his family among his captives and all his movable property among his plunder and started for home. Abraham upon hearing of his nephew's capture instantly collected a force and started in pursuit. Overtaking Chedorlaomer in the vicinity of Dan a bloody battle ensued in which Abraham was vic-

torious. The confederate kings were utterly routed and Lot, his family and his goods were all retaken with much other rich booty. Upon Abraham's return the King of Sodom went out to meet him and congratulate him upon his victory over the common foe and then the account continues, "And Melchisedek, King of Salem, brought forth bread and wine, and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of the most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be the most High God who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all." All this occurred more than 1900 years before Christ, yet in all the intervening time not one line of authentic information has reached us to add to our knowledge. It is true that the author of the book of Hebrews mentions Melchisedek several times and relates several things about him, but he draws all his information from this simple account in the book of Genesis. He tells us that he was "king of righteousness" and "king of peace." But this he gets by interpreting his name and the declaration in Genesis that he was "King of Shalam," or Salem as the word is rendered in English; the word Melchisedek meaning king of righteousness and Salem meaning peace. He tells us moreover that Melchisedek was

“without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.” But here again he simply alludes to the record in Genesis. No man when the book of Hebrews was written pretended to know anything about Melchisedek beyond the simple record in the Old Testament. There is no account there of his father or mother or descent. We are not told when he was born nor when he died. The statement in Hebrews, therefore, is simply a comment upon that in Genesis and amounts to nothing more than calling attention to the fact that so far as the record goes, and hence so far as our knowledge extends, he had neither father nor mother nor descent and was without beginning of days or end of life.

The legend makers have been busy for thousands of years weaving strange stories to account for this unique character. Some have asserted that he was none other than Shem, who, according to the short chronology, was still living in the days of Abraham; some tell us that Melchisedek was the Son of God Himself, who appeared to the father of the faithful; others among whom was the famous Origen declare him to have been an angel sent from God. One guess is as good as another so long as they are all without foundation and there is not a shadow of evidence to support any

of these conjectures. St. Jerome tells us that in his day in a town called Salem, near Scythopolis, the ruins of Melchisedek's palace were shown; but this was some 2300 years after the meeting of Abraham and Melchisedek, a sufficiently long time for legend to have appropriated any old ruin to explain a mystery. There is not the least probability that this Salem is the one referred to in Genesis 14th, as it does not lie in the track which Abraham would naturally have taken in returning from his foray. After all, therefore, that has transpired within more than 3500 years, we have not a particle of trustworthy information concerning Melchisedek beyond the brief and simple account in Genesis. Three things are there affirmed of him; first, that he was king of righteousness, his name having that signification; secondly that he was king of Salem; and thirdly, that he was priest of the most High God. Why he was named king of righteousness or justice we are not informed. Whether the name was descriptive of his personal character or of his official rank no intimation is here given. Elsewhere, however, in Scripture, we read of one Adonizedek, who was king of Jerusalem when the Israelites, returning from Egypt, invaded the land of Canaan. Now, Adonizedek means the lord of justice as Melchizedek means the

king of justice. Since both these persons were kings of Jerusalem, the similarity of their names would seem to indicate that they were descriptive of their official rank or function. They point out not righteous or just persons, but chiefs—a king and a lord—of justice. They seem to be official titles and to designate supreme judicial authority. The names are about equivalent to our “Chief Justice.” If this interpretation be correct, then the declaration concerning Melchisedek is that he was Supreme Judge, King of Salem, and Priest of the Most High God.

Salem was the name of the city or town originally built upon the site since occupied by Jerusalem. The name Salem means peace. Afterward, the city was called Jebus or Jebusi because of its inhabitants, the Jebusites; and finally at its conquest by David it took the name of Jerusalem, which according to the best lexicographers signifies foundation of peace. Gesenius renders it in German “Friedensgrund.” That Jerusalem and the ancient Salem are identical is rendered indubitable from the language of the Psalmist where he sings, “In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel; “In Salem also is his tabernacle and his dwelling place in Zion.”—Ps. 76:2. It is probable that the city was first called Salem and afterward

Jerusalem from its almost impregnable position which secured it from attack. So strong were its natural defenses that the Israelites failed to take it until the days of David, 400 years after their entrance into the promised land. It is true, we read in Judges 1, that Judah took it with the edge of the sword and burned it, but that this was only a partial or temporary occupancy is clear from the fact that in the same chapter we are told (verse 21) that "The children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day." A place so strong by nature and fortified by art would not often be disturbed by war. Its inhabitants would dwell in comparative security and hence it might very properly be named the home or ground of peace; or simply Salem—peace—as it was originally called. Of this natural stronghold Melchisedek was king, while at the same time he was supreme judge in Salem. He exercised the functions both of judge and king, and united in himself the legislative, executive and judicial departments of government.

But he was more; he was a priest as well as king and judge. He wore the mitre as well as the crown and the ermine, and represented both church and state. Just as the Czar of Russia to-

day is head alike of the nation and the church throughout all the Russias, or as the Pope of Rome a few years since was sovereign and pontiff over all the states of the church, so Melchisedek within his little realm represented all government—sacred and secular, human and divine. As Louis XIV said when some one spoke of the state to him, "The state, that is me," so Melchisedek could say, "the state, that is me; the church, that is me; the law, that is me." Such was the petty prince who met Abraham in the valley of Shaveh as he "returned from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him," and placed bread and wine before him, received tithes of him and blessed him. Our chief concern at present is not with the judge or king, but with the priest. Our text declares that Christ is a priest after the order of Melchisedek and the great question now before us is To what church did he belong, and Of what order of priesthood was Melchizedek?

He did not belong to the Aaronic priesthood nor to the Levitical order; for the tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron were as yet unborn. He was not a priest of any Jewish order, for he was contemporary with Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. He was not an idolater and did

not belong to the priesthood of any false religion. He is styled a "priest of the Most High God." This title is never given in Scripture to any god of any false religion. Eleven times the phrase "The Most High God" occurs in Scripture and in every case it designates Jehovah, the only true God. Melchisedek was, therefore, a priest of the true religion, officiating at the altar of the true God, ages before the law was given to Moses, or the Jewish church established on the Aaronic priesthood, instituted, and we must therefore look for the order to which he belonged, back of the call of Abraham, among the patriarchal tribes, while as yet the ark of the covenant was entrusted to no one chosen nation. We mistake if we suppose that God's church originated with the giving of the law and the building of the tabernacle, or even with the call of Abraham. Had God no church on the earth and was there no true religion from the fall of man down to the call of Abraham, some 1900 years B. C.? Then how came Enoch to walk so close with God that he simply "was not for God took him"? And how came Noah to build an altar upon the land yet slimy with the ooze of the flood, and offer sacrifice upon it? Who were the sons of God who married the daughters of men mentioned in Gen. 6:2-4, and who were "the sons

of God who came to present themselves before the Lord" spoken of in Job 1-6? The truth is, God has never been without a people on the earth and His church was never without a human priesthood from the fall until the crucifixion. Before the Jewish, was the primitive church and the patriarchal religion. Does any one ask when these were instituted? Go back to the account of the fall and you shall find that the moment our first parents were cast out of the garden, another way of access to God was provided. We are told that God placed at the eastern gate of Eden "cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." These cherubim were not angels as is generally supposed, nor did either or both of them brandish a flashing sword. The words cherub and cherubim are never used in Scripture to designate angels. They never occur after this first mention of them until God instructed Moses to make the ark of the covenant for the tabernacle. He then commands Moses to make "a mercy seat of pure gold" and "two cherubim of gold, of beaten work" "in the two ends of the mercy seat;" "and the cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings and their faces shall look one to another." These were not angels nor any other living

creatures, but images of gold. They were not statues of men or of angels, for in the tables of the law which were to be kept in the ark, the Israelites were expressly forbidden to make unto themselves "any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth." Moses is not told what a cherub is or in what form to make it. He is supposed to know all about it. If they were anything but birds or insects they must have been composite figures, for no other animals have wings. But birds or insects they could not be, for the commandment forbade the making the likeness of them. They were metallic figures, therefore, made up of parts of different animals. They may have been in the form of men with the wings of a bird. Or they might have a human body with a lion's head and with the feet of oxen; but whatever other parts they had, they must have wings. Ezekiel 1:6 tells us that he saw in his vision cherubim "and every one had four faces and every one had four wings . . . and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot . . . they had the face of a man and the face of a lion, the face of an ox and the face of an eagle." Moses' residence in Egypt would make him familiar with these composite figures; for winged lions

and sphinxes abounded in the valley of the Nile. It is Moses who tells us that he made cherubim on the mercy seat and it is he also who tells us that God placed cherubim at the east of Eden after our first parents were expelled. If the cherubim on the mercy seat were simply composite images those outside Eden were the same. But some one will ask, did they not brandish swords, and if so were they not living beings? To which I answer that the account makes no such statement. It reads God placed "two cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way." There were two cherubim and only one sword. Which one wielded it, if either? It is said that the sword turned every way—not that either cherub turned it. The cherubim whatever they were had no control of the sword. But a careful examination of the Hebrew will lead us to doubt the translation in our version. The word translated "sword" is descriptive, not of the metal or shape of such a weapon, but of the effect produced by it and means strictly "a destroyer," "a devourer." As the sword spoken of was not of metal but of flame, the passage may be rendered "a flaming destroyer," or "a devouring flame," and the meaning would be that between the cherubim there glowed a fierce, devouring fire. But no matter whether we render the phrase "a flam-

ing sword" or "a devouring flame" we shall reach substantially the same conclusion. For if it was a flaming sword turning every way, then it was a leaping, darting, flashing fire. The inevitable conclusion, therefore, is that what God placed at the east of Eden was an altar having two composite figures called cherubim, with a fierce fire between them darting its swordlike tongues of flame in every direction. Here then was the first altar of religion and its establishment was contemporaneous with the fall.

At the same time there must have been a revelation given to the fallen pair beyond what is recorded in Genesis, else they had not known the meaning of this altar or that there was any access to God, much less could they have known what kind of sacrifices would be accepted. But they did know that the fire upon this altar represented the divine presence and that they had access through the blood of sacrifice, for "in process of time Cain and Abel brought an offering unto the Lord." And that they had been instructed what kind of offering to bring is clear from what God said to Cain upon the occasion. Cain, who had brought of the fruit of the field, was enraged to find his offering rejected while Abel's lamb was accepted and God expostulates with him after this manner: "Why art

thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well sin lieth at thy door." In plain English this is saying, It is useless to be angry. You have nobody to blame but yourself. If you had brought the right kind of an offering you would have been accepted, and if you did not you committed a sin, for you knew what you ought to bring. This language clearly implies that with the establishment of the altar on the east of Eden a revelation had been given to man, teaching him that here again he might have access to God and might approach Him that dwelleth between the cherubim, but that he might come near to that God who now reveals Himself as "a consuming fire" only through the blood of sacrifice. It was revealed to him, moreover, that the only sacrifice acceptable to God was "the firstling of his flock," symbol of the "Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world." Here, then, we have the first altar and the primitive religion of humanity, divinely instituted coincident with the fall. Here at the eastern gate of Eden the first families of men brought their bleeding lambs and offered them in sacrifice to propitiate "Him that dwelleth between the cherubim" and God then, as in Elijah's case, answered by fire and accepted their offerings.

As population multiplied and people, in consequence, moved farther from Eden, in course of time it became impossible for all to return to this altar to perform their acts of worship. And so they made copies of the cherubim and took them with them and in their new abodes erected altars in imitation of the original. The necessities of the case in the absence of any information to the contrary, would force us to believe that this was done; but we are not left to unsupported conjecture. The sleepless dragon which kept watch at the Garden of Hesperedes and the dragon which guarded the golden fleece against the Argonauts in Greek mythology; the existence of winged lions, of oxen with eagles' heads and wings, and of human figures with the heads of birds or dogs, now found in the ruined temples of Egypt and Assyria together with the double-faced gods of India, many of them antedating the days of Moses, are conclusive proof that copies of the original cherubim with many variations, had been made wherever man had wandered. The difference between true and false worship in patriarchal times seems to have been this: the people of God worshiped an invisible Deity, symbolized by the shekinah between the cherubim, while idolaters paid their worship to an image which they set up

in place of the shekinah. Both had the cherubim in their temples. The one regarded them only as husks surrounding a kernel of fire or as a tabernacle in which the Divine presence abode. The other looked upon them simply as adjuncts to the image placed between them. There was no mysterious Divine presence to be guarded and sheltered by them and so the people were content to worship an idol, the work of men's hands and to ignore the presence of a spiritual God. In course of time idolatry departed farther and farther from the original religion, made images of any creature, set them up and called them gods, and bowed in worship before them. But all men were not idolaters and there is good reason to believe that the original form of worship was never lost, but that in every age holy men bowed before copies of the Edenic altar and worshiped God under the symbol of a "consuming fire." It was thus that Moses recognized his Maker in the burning bush and the children of Israel in the pillar of fire. When God commanded Moses to make the mercy seat with its hovering cherubim, He revealed no new religion to man, but only restored the original. The mercy seat with its cherubim and glowing shekinah was only a copy of the two cherubim and the flaming sword which was first erected just outside

Eden's gate. There was no need that Moses should be told in what form to make the cherubim for through all the ages these figures had been preserved and their form was familiar. Up to this time God's people had been scattered abroad without unity and with no center of worship.

The institution of the Jewish church consisted in calling a special people, in restoring the primitive worship, in giving the ark of His covenant to a unified church and in making first the tabernacle and afterward the temple the religious center of the nation. Israel had been in bondage in Egypt and the religion of their fathers had suffered from contact with idolatry. Hence a new revelation was necessary. But it was not a revelation of a new religion—it was only the re-enactment and restoration of the old one. From Adam to Moses God's chosen ones had bowed before that same mercy seat and gazed upon that same awful shekinah and worshiped "Him that dwelleth between the cherubim."

At first every man was his own priest, as we learn from the cases of Cain and Abel, who brought each his own sacrifice unto the Lord. But as people multiplied, the father of each family became the priest of his own household, e. g., Noah built an altar and offered sacrifice for his family upon

the land just emerged from the flood. As families in course of time were united into tribes, and these in turn were merged into nations, the chief of the tribe or the king of the nation became the high priest of his people. Even as late as the exodus Moses exercised the functions of both king and priest until God separated between them by appointing Aaron to the priesthood. Melchisedek was such a royal priest of the Most High God. In those olden times the church of God was a unity. Among those who rejected idolatry there was but one God, one cult, and one priesthood. Melchisedek, standing before the original altar with its cherubic guardians and consuming fire, was a priest of the patriarchal church and of the primitive religion. Antedating the Aaronic priesthood and the selection of Israel to be God's chosen people and even the call of Abraham to be the father of the faithful, he stands in the undivided patriarchal church as the sacerdotal representative of all God's people everywhere. He belongs to the priesthood of humanity in the original and everlasting church of the Most High God.

The question now occurs, in what respects was Christ a priest of the same order as Melchisedek? In the first place, Christ belongs to that order of priesthood because he antedates the Jewish reli-

gion and all specialized forms of worship. We are told in Scripture that "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law," but we greatly mistake if we suppose His priesthood to date only from the incarnation. He was born of a woman, but He was older than His mother. He was made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, but He lived before the law was given. He came to redeem them that were under the law, but His redeeming work did not begin with His birth. It was already hoary with age at the nativity. Mary little dreamed as she hugged her new-born babe to her heart that she was holding in her arms the "ancient of days," but Jesus Himself declares, "Before Abraham was I am," and John asserts "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Does the world esteem Him David's son, "How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord? saying, the Lord said unto my Lord sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." "All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." It was He, as the voice of the Lord God, who walked with our first parents in Eden in the cool of the day. It was

He who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and moved in a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night before the Israelitish host, and walked with the three Hebrew children over the coals of the fiery furnace. All along the ages His presence has been manifest in the church and without it the church would be empty and meaningless as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Calvary's gory tragedy was no new act in the drama of redemption. It was only the lifting of the curtain that men might behold what the Son of God had always suffered for our race. Not then for the first time was he "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities." The moment man sinned, Jesus bared His bosom to the knife as our sin offering. He was "the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world." He was not only the sacrifice but the priest as well. Standing between the cherubim robed in flame upon that first altar at the eastern gate of Eden, He offered Himself as the only sufficient sacrifice for the sin of the world. The glory and the saving efficiency of His offering was that it was voluntary. The Psalmist heard and recorded the shout that made all Heaven ring "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire . . . burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required, then said I, lo! I come, in the volume

of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." He was not put to death by men. To prevent just this mistake He tells us, "No man taketh my life from me. I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." In His priestly office He was "without father, without mother, without descent, without beginning of days or end of life." For He was before all, priest of the Most High God throughout all ages.

Again, like Melchisedek, He holds the reins of all government in His hand and is at one and the same time "The Lord of righteousness," "the Prince of peace" and the "Head of the church." At His birth the magi asked where is He that is born King of the Jews? They were looking for the long promised and long expected King of Salem, and lo, at last He had come; for the angels shouted over Judea's plains, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will to men; for unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord." He came to set up an everlasting kingdom and was put to death at last because He declared Himself a King. But His kingdom was not of this world—it was an empire of peace. Just before mounting to the throne of all empire, hear Him whisper, "Peace I leave

with you, my peace I give unto you." He is not only King, but also Judge. "All judgment has been committed to the Son. And "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad." He sits upon the bench as well as on the throne and weighs with even-handed justice the affairs of men. His empire is peace and His court is righteousness. Hence we are exhorted to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Need it be added that He embodies all authority in the church and is the one priest of the Most High God? Why, "there is no other name given under heaven and among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ." "There is but one Mediator between God and man—the Man Christ Jesus." He tells us Himself, "No man cometh to the Father but by me." By me, if any man enter in, he shall go in and out and find pasture." No wonder that the revelator when he saw Heaven opened tells us that he beheld One who "was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood and His name is called The Word of God," and that "on His head were many crowns," for all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth.

Finally, like Melchisedek, He is the representative of all mankind. The Son of God while upon earth delighted to be called the Son of Man. But that title in English is ambiguous—in any other language it is big with meaning. In English we have but one word to express “man,” the male sex and “man” meaning mankind as distinguished from brutes. In all other languages there are two words, and whenever Jesus is called the Son of Man the one meaning mankind is employed. The son of the male sex He was not in any sense, but the son of mankind He was in the broadest sense of the term.

There was something in the Hebrew besides the Jew, there was something in the Hellenist besides the Greek, there was something in the Latin besides the Roman. That something was essential man. Beneath all differences of color, race, nationality and language there is something common to the human species the wide world over—it is common humanity. Well, Jesus Christ was not the son of the Jew or the Greek or the Roman—He was the Son of Man. As Adam was the father of all races, so Jesus was the common Son of them all. Adam was the fountain whence all the racial stream flowed; Christ was the reservoir into which they were all again gathered. There is

nothing tribal or ethnic or racial about Him—He is simply a man—the representative of our common humanity. He belongs to no country or clime or time. He is the Son of Humanity throughout all ages.

In His priesthood, like Melchisedek, He stands at the altar of a common religion for all our race, representing mankind, not in its accidental divisions, but in its essential unity. Here there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. The Aaronic priesthood was a narrow, local, temporary institution and must pass away—that of Melchisedek was built upon the bed rock of human nature and must be as immortal as man. The Christian religion is only the original religion re-enacted and Jesus as the Head of the church is a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek.

The cherubic altar, the shekinah and the priesthood of Melchisedek have all vanished from the church on earth, but their significance has not been destroyed. They have only disappeared by being swallowed up in fulfillment. We will see them again by and by in grander forms and shrouded in deeper and more glorious mystery. The fragmentary truths of all false religions and the various

dispensations of the true, from Adam to the end of time will be harmonized and unified when the church of all ages and lands is gathered together in God's Paradise above. In Eden the altar was set up in the eastern gate and man could only approach it from without. Then there were but two cherubim because the altar faced only one way. In Paradise regained the altar is within and it faces all the cardinal points of the compass, because the redeemed are to come up from the east and the west and from the north and the south and sit down in the kingdom of God. The altar now has four faces with four cherubim guarding its mysteries and glories. In stead of the shekinah, the symbol of Deity, the great I Am is there Himself, blazing with a "glory which excelleth." At the first altar the church had no representative, because the church was then inchoate. Around the final altar are four and twenty elders who lead the sacramental host of God's elect in worship. But with all these variations, as the revelator lifts the curtain and gives us a glimpse of the church triumphant in worship, we readily recognize the old altar before which the patriarchs bowed, with its cherubim and shekinah and bleeding Lamb, and the Priest after the order of Melchisedek antedating all priesthoods, embodying all authority and

representing all races, is still before the altar. Hear the revelator as the Apocalypse unrolls itself before him. "Behold a throne was set in Heaven and one sat on the throne, and He that sat was to look upon like jasper and a sardine stone, and there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal and in the midst of the throne; and round about the throne were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him and they were full of eyes within; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty which was and is and is to come. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts and in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb as it had

been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors which are the prayers of saints, And they sung a new song, saying: Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests."

The vision is marvelous, but its features are familiar. There is the old altar with God in glory sitting upon it, and with the cherubim (beasts with wings) standing guard around it. There are the worshipers and the sacrificial Lamb. But where is the priest who at one and the same time can represent the church of all ages and all lands, in all its dispensations? The book of ritual is there, but who can open it and conduct the services so that all may understand? Lo, there He stands with garments dipped in blood—the Son of Man. For "behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to

loose the seven seals thereof." No wonder that the chorus broke from ten thousand times ten thousand lips, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing." "As it was in the beginning it now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen."

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